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FEBRUARY 2023 #221

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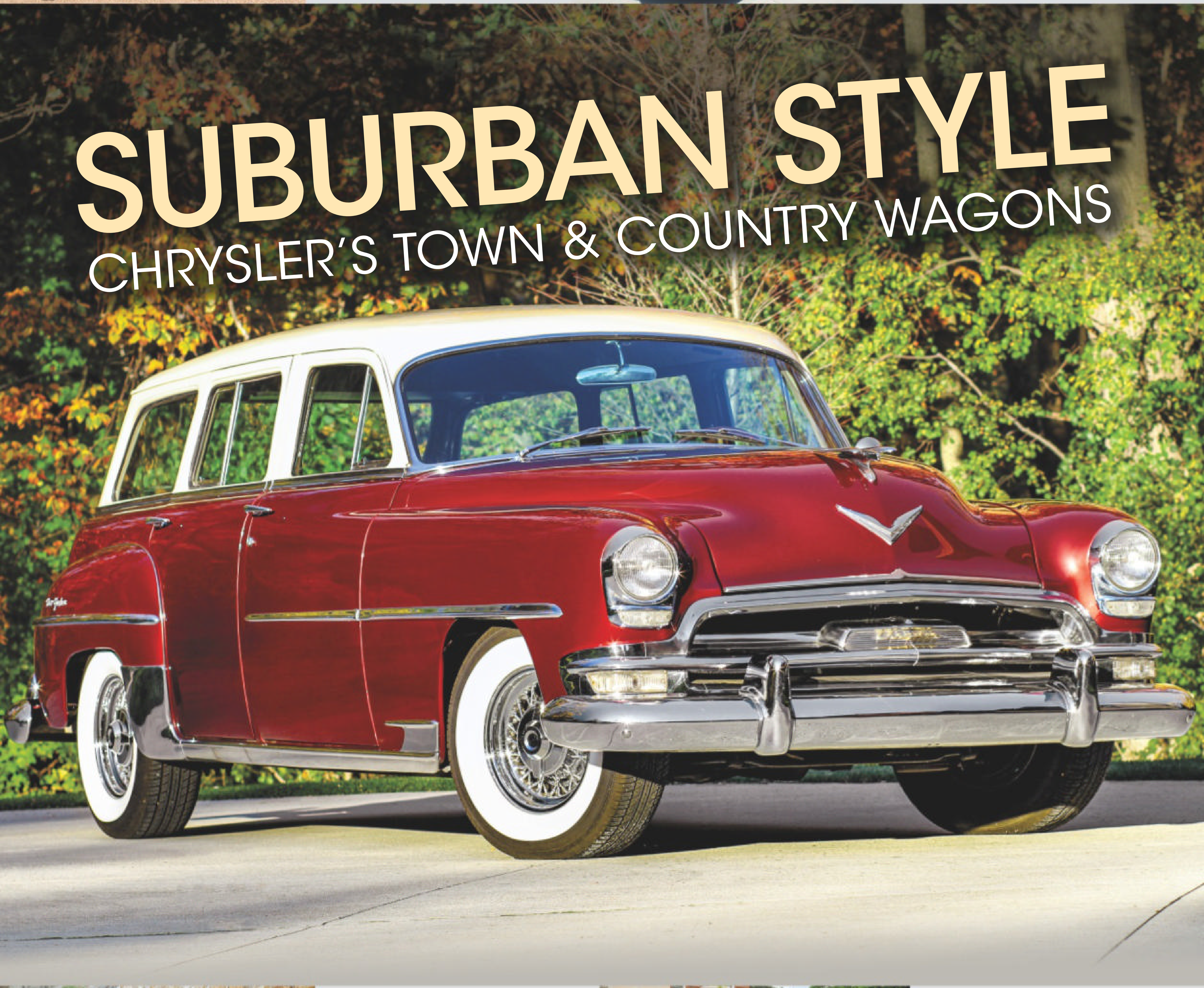

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2023
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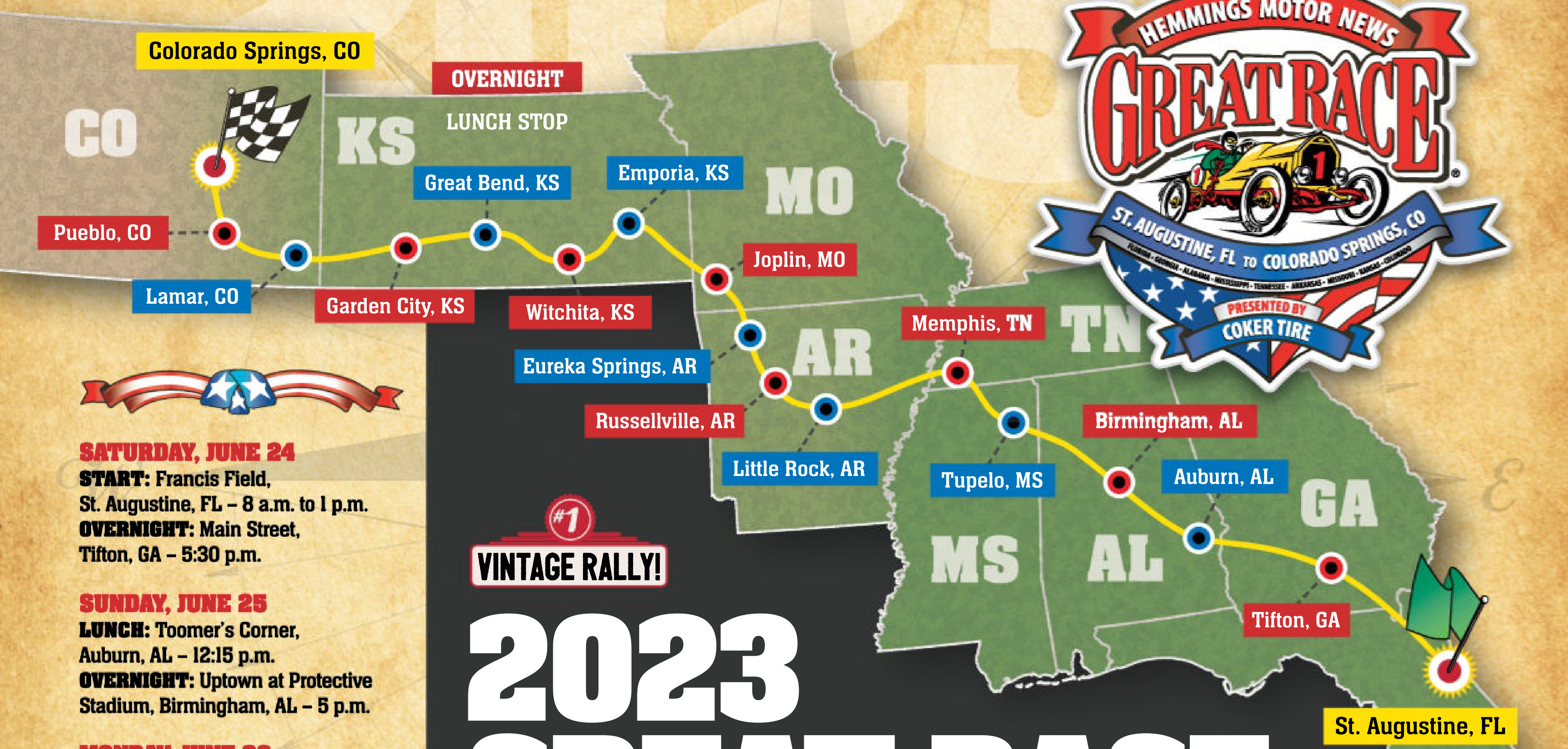
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Tifton, GA – 5:30 p.m.

SUNDAY, JUNE 25
LUNCH: Toomer's Corner,
Auburn, AL – 12:15 p.m.
OVERNIGHT: Uptown at Protective
Stadium, Birmingham, AL – 5 p.m.

MONDAY, JUNE 26
LUNCH: Courthouse Square,
Tupelo, MS – noon
OVERNIGHT: Guesthouse at
Graceland, Memphis, TN – 5 p.m.

TUESDAY, JUNE 27
LUNCH: Clinton Library,
Little Rock, AR – 11:45 a.m.
OVERNIGHT: Russellville Depot,
Russellville, AR – 5 p.m.

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 28
LUNCH: Community Center,
Eureka Springs, AR – 12:15 p.m.
OVERNIGHT: Main Street downtown,
Joplin, MO – 5 p.m.

THURSDAY, JUNE 29
LUNCH: Commercial Street,
Emporia, KS – noon
OVERNIGHT: Old Town,
Wichita, KS – 5 p.m.

FRIDAY, JUNE 30
LUNCH:: Courthouse Square,
Great Bend, KS – noon
OVERNIGHT: Main Street at Stevens
Park, Garden City, KS – 5 p.m.

SATURDAY, JULY 1
LUNCH: Colorado Welcome Center,
Lamar, CO – 11:45 a.m.
OVERNIGHT: Pueblo Union Depot,
Pueblo, CO – 5 p.m.

SUNDAY, JULY 2
FINISH: Tejon Street,
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> "I was heartened to find so many vintage vehicles still running and reasonably attainable."

Seasons and Change

Winter tends to come on somewhat suddenly up here in Vermont—one day it's a gorgeous "Indian summer" with autumn colors and light jackets and a few days later you're scraping the windshield under a gray morning sky. Needless to say, the cool cars get tucked away quickly at that point, if you're the sort who tries to make use every bit of the "good" weather. I had my '67 Camaro out just a week or so ago as this is written and didn't even need to slide the heater control over to "warm." It snowed last night, so that ride was probably the last bit of vintage motoring I'll get in before spring.

But it's exactly that notion that gets my mind turning every year around this time—do I really have to give up on old cars altogether for the next few months? Couldn't I just revisit the time-honored practice of having a "winter beater" and find something interesting yet cheap to bomb about in the meantime?

It's a premise that sparks naysayers to point out that there aren't any usable cars from the period prior to, let's say, the '80s that can be had cheaply—they'll insist that if you're on a budget, you can have vintage or you can have something that runs, but not both.

I'm not so easily dissuaded when it comes to such things, and besides, I'll take any excuse to do some virtual shopping for an interesting car. What I found was somewhat encouraging, if also maybe a bit dangerous, as I really don't need to acquire a single additional motor vehicle right now. Still, I couldn't help considering the possibilities.

To that end, I conjured the notion of a winter beater challenge, wherein the participating contestants would each have to find something to use for their winter commute that was built before 1980 and cost no more than $4,000. Now, at first, four grand may seem a bit steep for anything considered a beater, but take a look around at the used car market today—very slim pickins below that price point. To further justify this scheme, I like to tell myself that an older, somehow interesting car will be more likely to offer a return on investment come springtime.

I hadn't actually challenged anyone else, so this was mostly an academic exercise… at least for the moment. To keep myself from considering project cars that would need work to be useful as transportation, I added another stipulation: the subject must be already roadworthy.

Right out of the gate, I found a '77 Olds Cutlass—the last of the colonnade models. This one was a gold-colored four-door with 14-inch wheels, and tan interior… a once fairly common specimen, but not today. It turned out to be a lower-mileage example claiming to still have original paint. The photos weren't great, and the wording suggested the car was being sold by someone who might have inherited it and who just wanted it gone, which helped keep the asking price comfortably below my $4,000 cap. I bookmarked it and pressed further to see what else was out there.

Soon I came upon a '67 Buick Wildcat, this one also a four-door, though oddly, not a hardtop. It still had its original 430-cu.in. engine, and though it was a bit beat up, the seller claimed he'd been driving it for the past couple summers with no issues. Delving still further I discovered a '65 Coronet, a two-door hardtop with the polyspherical version of the 318 V-8, a TorqueFlite, and missing the lower portions of its quarter panels and fenders. This one was also on the road but needed some sorting. Still, it could have made a tough driver with later project car potential—a real contender.

The search continued nightly for a couple weeks, and plenty of other options cropped up, including one very alluring '62 Cadillac I'm still seeing in my daydreams. I don't intend to move forward with the beater stratagem right now—the whole "too-many-cars" thing is still an issue—but I was heartened to find so many vintage vehicles still running and reasonably attainable. Even in the Northeast, there's still plenty of fodder for classic motoring fun out there. Let us know if you'll be motoring some sort of seasoned-but-interesting beater this winter.

Switching gears for a moment, I want to say that I've really enjoyed guiding *Hemmings Classic Car* for the last two and a half years—this magazine covers a vast array of fascinating vehicles, and also enjoys a very loyal and supportive audience. But, I've also continued as editor of *Hemmings Muscle Machines* during the same period, and keeping two monthly magazines rolling is a lot to juggle. So, I'm pleased to announce that Matt Litwin will be taking over the editor's chair of *HCC* with the next issue. Matt and I have worked together for many years, and he's been a tremendous help to me with *HCC* during the time I've been editor—you'll certainly be in good hands. While I'll be refocusing my efforts on *Muscle Machines*, you may see my byline pop up here from time to time. Thanks to everyone who reads and supports *HCC*.

Write to our editor-in-chief at tmcgean@hemmings.com and follow him on Instagram @tmcgean.

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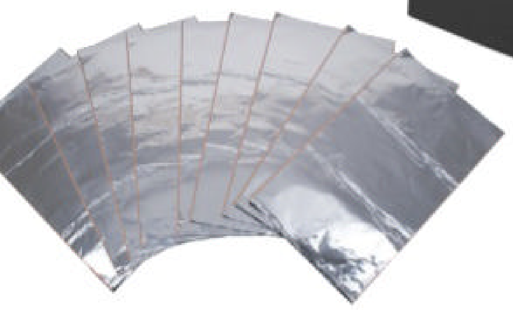

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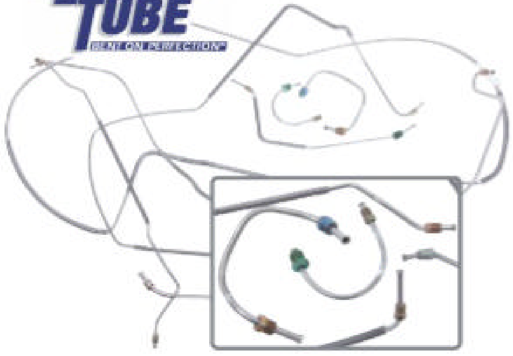

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BY TOM COMERRO

AACA 2023 Calendar

THE ANTIQUE AUTOMOBILE CLUB OF AMERICA HAS RELEASED ITS 2023 SCHEDULE of national meets, tours, and conventions to take place around the country and Canada where the AACA Ontario Region will host the Founders Tour. For the uninitiated, the 87-year-old club focuses on preserving, restoring, and maintaining automobiles and automotive history. The Annual Convention features a trade show, seminars, and an awards banquet, while the tours are a great opportunity for owners to enjoy their vehicles along scenic and historic highways. The meets feature car shows, car corrals, swap meets, and tens of thousands of like-minded hobbyists and enthusiasts to exchange their knowledge and love of cars. The 2023 gatherings are as follows:

- January 26-28: **AACA Winter Nationals,** Miami, Florida
- February 9-11: **AACA Annual Convention,** Williamsburg, Virginia
- March 18: **Indian River Auto Show,** Vero Beach, Florida
- April 13-15: **Southeastern Nationals,** Charlotte Motor Speedway, Concord, North Carolina
- April 30-May 3: **Southeastern Divisional Tour,** Oak Ridge, Tennessee
- May 18-20: **Eastern Spring Nationals,** Gettysburg, Pennsylvania
- July 16-22: **Founders Tour,** Ontario & Quebec, Canada
- July 26-29: **Special Eastern Nationals,** Norwich, New York
- August 2-5: **Vintage Tour,** Aroostook County, Maine
- August 10-12: **Grand Nationals,** Bettendorf, Iowa
- September 25-29: **Western Divisional Tour,** Santa Ynez Valley, Central California
- October 3-6: **Hershey Fall Nationals,** Hershey, Pennsylvania

Make your plans now and take advantage of early bird entries, registration, and admissions. For more about the AACA and its 2023 itinerary, visit aaca.org.

Porsche Speedsters at the Newport Car Museum

THE NEWPORT CAR MUSEUM ANNOUNCES A NEW ADDITION TO ITS PORSCHE Speedster exhibit with a 1994 911 (964) speedster joining the fray. The Porsche completes the museum's display at the Portsmouth, Rhode Island, facility with every version of the Speedster built since 1954. The open-top Porsche was the third version of the famous Speedster and underwent several styling changes compared to the previous 911 models. Fairly rare, it's thought that only 427 of the 964s made it to the U.S. during the 1993 and 1994 model years.

"I'm fairly certain there are very few, if any, museums where the public can see all five production versions of the Porsche Speedster, which were built from 1954 to 2019," Newport Car Museum Founder Gunther Buerman says.

The '94 Speedster will join other Speedsters from 1956, 1989, 2011, and 2019, which are also a part of the museum's Pop-Up Porsche exhibit. The Porsches will be shown for a while as they have become a part of a semi-permanent exhibit, so there is plenty of time to see them. The Newport Car Museum also displays other galleries committed to cars from all eras and types from all over the world. Visit newportcarmuseum.org for more information.

T Talk in Vegas

THE ANNUAL MODEL T FORD CLUB OF AMERICA Meeting will take place in Las Vegas with a weekend of activities planned for club members to enjoy while planning out the vision and direction of the club over the next few years. The Board of Directors annual meeting will take place on Friday along with an evening social mixer hosted by the local Southern Nevada Model T Club. Saturday will include a trip to The Mob Museum in downtown Las Vegas and then a jaunt over to the Shelby Heritage Center, a facility dedicated to the story of Carroll Shelby and his famous company, featuring more than 30 Shelby cars. This will be followed by an evening awards banquet at Gateway Classic Cars and an optional Sunday trip to see the Nostalgia Street Rods Collection, a private collection of more than 150 hot rods, street rods, scooters, and memorabilia. The meeting will take place March 24-26, and the host hotel will be the Staybridge Suites in Las Vegas. Spaces are limited, so be sure to visit southernnevadamodeltclub.org/2023-mtfca-annual-mtg for more information.

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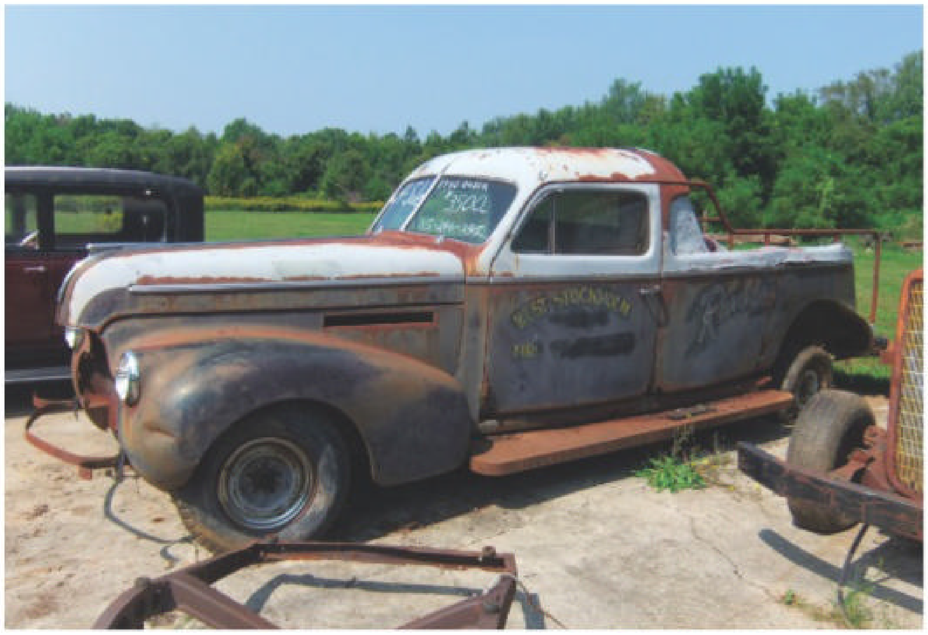
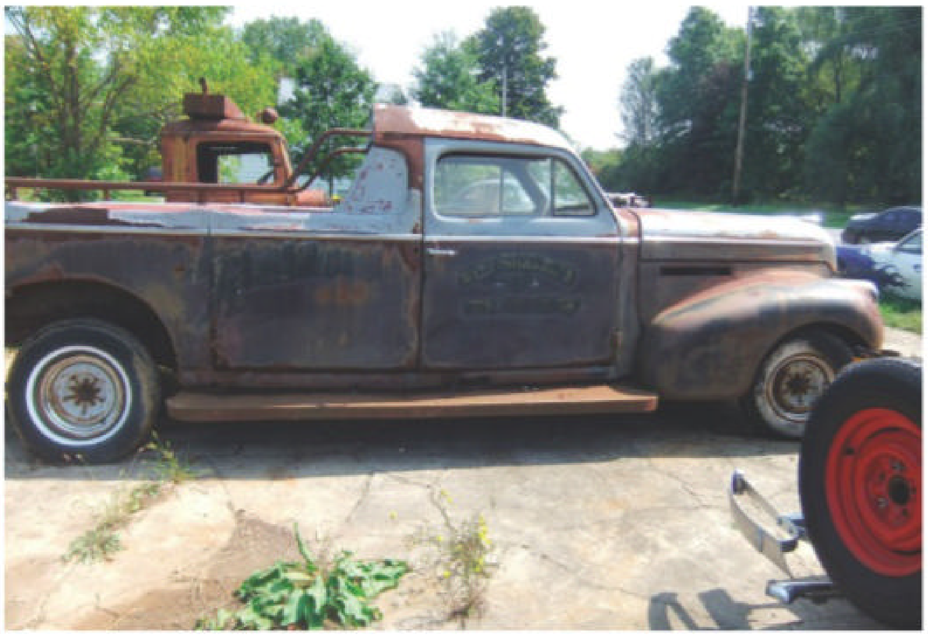
BY DANIEL STROHL



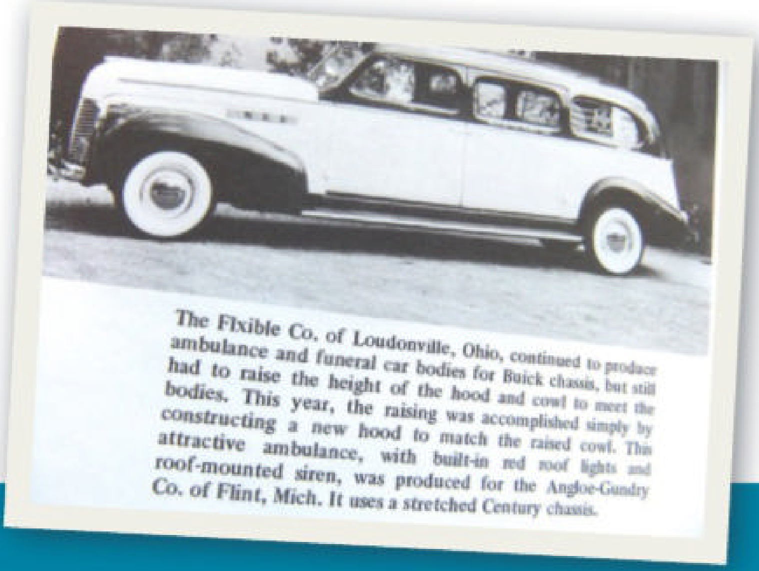


Bu-Bulance

ROBERT MILENKOFF SAID HE WAS DRIVING NEW YORK ROUTE 104 OUTSIDE OF ROCHESTER A FEW YEARS BACK WHEN HE CAME ACROSS A 1940 Buick fire truck for sale and had to stop to take some photos. “The large hood is what caught my eye and I came to the conclusion that it was most likely an ambulance,” Robert writes. He then confirmed his suspicions afterward with a look through George Dammann’s *Seventy Years of Buick*, which noted that Flxible constructed ambulances on Buick chassis that matched the one that he saw.

The one he spotted outside Rochester is long gone, but it does bring to mind another Flxible-built Buick we discussed a few years back (see *HCC* #160 and #162). That one, which started out as a later flower car, had morphed into a parade car possibly used in firefighter competitions, and it’s certainly likely that the Rochester car was also modified from its original purpose for those competitions or simply as an equipment hauler.

The flower car has recently appeared in the backgrounds of online classifieds in the New York/New Jersey/Connecticut area. As for the ambulance’s current whereabouts, we don’t know, but Robert says that it’ll “need more than a first aid kit to bring it back to its former glory.”



The Flxible Co. of Loudonville, Ohio, continued to produce ambulance and funeral car bodies for Buick chassis, but still had to raise the height of the hood and cowl to meet the bodies. This year, the raising was accomplished simply by constructing a new hood to match the raised cowl. This attractive ambulance, with built-in red roof lights and roof-mounted siren, was produced for the Angloe-Gundry Co. of Flint, Mich. It uses a stretched Century chassis.

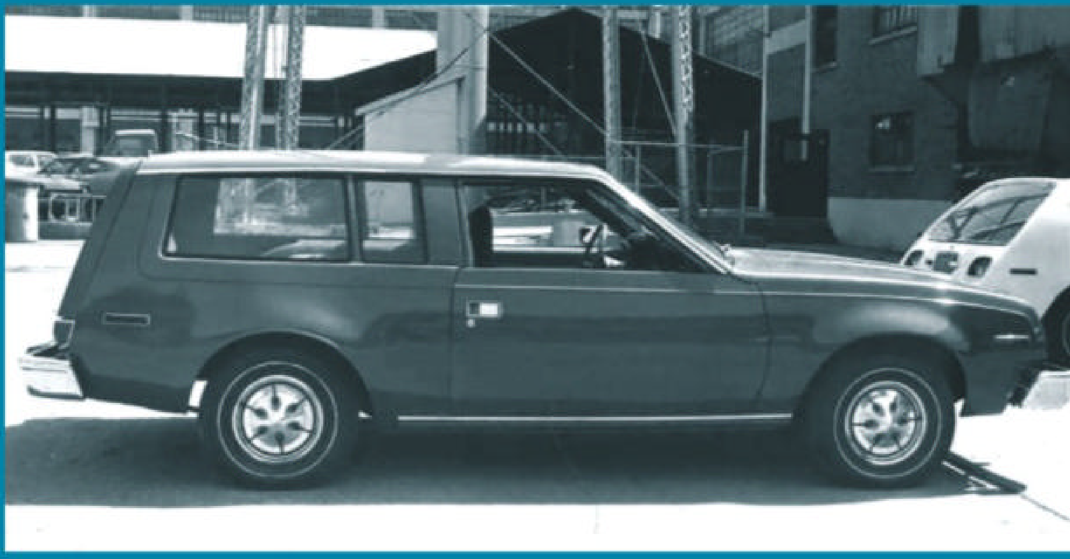
RE: Gremwagon

WE HAD HOPED TO HAVE HEARD FROM SOMEBODY WORKING AT AMC at the time the company built the Gremlin-esque station wagon that we speculated about in the December 2022 issue, but we got the scoop on it from somebody in a position with just as much knowledge about the mockup: Jeffrey Limerick, who represented his family’s dealership, Tri-County AMC/Jeep in Cincinnati, Ohio, on the dealer advisory board at the time.

According to Jeffrey, AMC was working on an update to the Hornet/Concord wagon body in late 1979 and early 1980. The advisory board, he says, “demand(ed) the wagon be updated to match the cargo volume of the Fairmont and Volare wagons.” This was part of the same redesign effort that would have updated the sedans with more formal roofs.

AMC’s designers followed through on those demands with the prototype seen in the photo, but Jeffrey said that Renault’s purchase of AMC put a halt to the updates. In place of the updates to the Hornet station wagon, Renault and AMC introduced the Alliance and Encore.

Thanks, Jeff!



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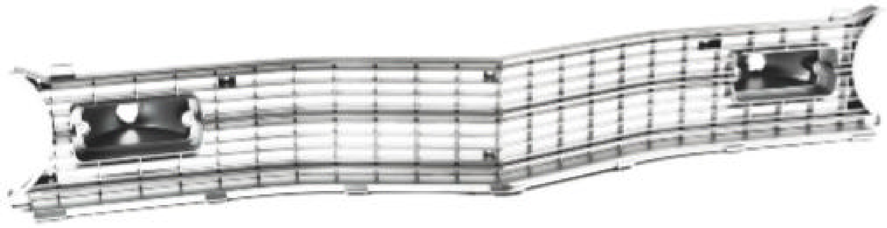

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When Buick's flagship Skylark convertible returned for its sophomore season in 1954, the glamorous drop-top wore sportier styling and more chrome trim. This low-production two-door inspired a new premium collectible from the model experts at Automodello. Part of the ONE24 line of 1:24-scale vehicles, this Skylark can be had as an Encomium Edition in Matador Red (24B021) or Arctic White (24B020), with 54 examples made of each; up to 199 Standard Edition examples will be available in Lido Green (24B022). These Skylarks share glossy, automotive-quality paint, exquisite scale brightwork, and fine wire wheels with simulated knock-off spinners. A removable tonneau cover and realistic CanvasTouch convertible top are included for a choice of display. Buick fans will love this heirloom-quality model. **—*Mark J. McCourt***

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YOU DISPLAYED SOME VERY OUTSTANDING photographs of a 1954 Chevrolet Bel Air two-door sedan in *HCC* #217—well done! I enjoyed the work of David Conwill as well; it's a tale worth reading again and again. I owned a '54 Chevrolet Bel Air purchased from a sweet, little old lady in Newport, Rhode Island, back in 1968. She had kept the car pristine, and it was just like the one featured. I hope to see Matthew and David working as a team again soon. Thank you both!
Thomas Barlow
Manchester, Connecticut

I ENJOYED JIM RICHARDSON'S column in which he reveals his ideas about tackling a restoration the right way (*HCC* #217). My brother and I have restored vehicles over the years, including most recently a 1997 Dodge featuring a Cummins 12-valve engine with a million miles on it. The tips you offered are all excellent reminders. It prompted me to think of my dad, who used to tell us, "Before you do anything, make sure the brakes are in good shape, because if you get a car moving and can't stop it, only bad things will happen."

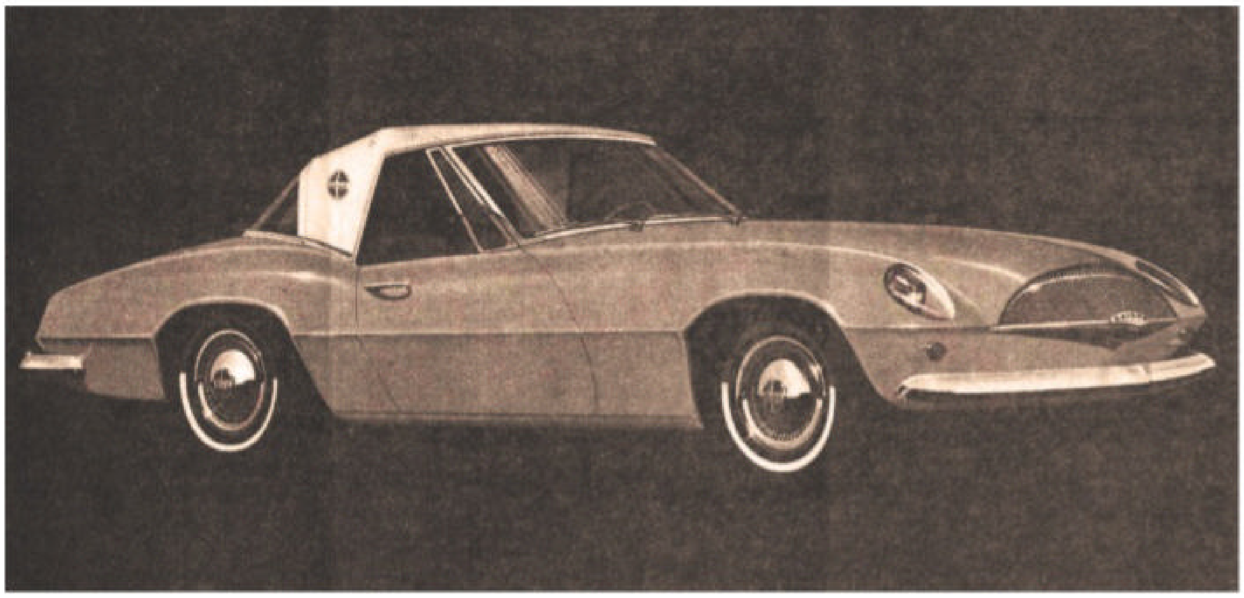
To that point, I would like to add an item to your reading list about brake fluid. We have subscribed to a publication entitled the *Turbo Diesel Register* since the early Nineties and they offer great articles on our diesel trucks. I cite the editorial entitled, "Brake Fluid Exposed" by James Walker within issue 105; it's apropos to your paragraph about brakes where you commented about DOT 5 silicone brake fluid and moisture. Until reading Mr. Walker's article, we were unaware of DOT 5.1, but now have begun to use it because of the inherent advantages as described in the piece. Thanks to you and *Hemmings Classic Car* for a great magazine.
Bruce Behner
Rome, Georgia

OVER THE PAST 68 YEARS I HAVE owned 38 cars, three trucks, three motorcycles, and three boats. I always enjoyed your magazine and especially appreciated the "Three Into One" article by David Conwill in the November issue (*HCC* #218), recalling the restoration of the 1947 Buick Roadmaster convertible. Buicks have always been my favorite and I have had nine, including my current 2007 Lucerne, which has just turned 200,000 miles.

In 1953, my friend Rod had a 1946 or '47 Buick ragtop. I must say, we had so much fun in that car during our last year of high school in Ballard [Seattle], Washington. The car was smooth! Rod didn't care for the color, so one day three of our gang painted the car—using brushes—with Plastilux paint. You couldn't even see the brush marks when it was done. Thanks for the fond memories.
Garry Laine
Hillsboro, Oregon

REGARDING PAT FOSTER'S KAISER Jeep article in the September 2022 issue of *HCC* (#216), I am attaching a copy of another photograph to add to the collection. This was another proposal from Kaiser Jeep that, of course, never materialized.

I want to thank you for a job well done reporting on the independent automakers of the past and the aforementioned article. The Kaiser-Frazer cars have been a part of my life since their introduction when I was a kid. I remember well my dad's new 1947 Frazer and especially the '51 Deluxe club coupe. I, too, have lots of information on these cars and would



be glad to share should you ever need assistance in writing another article about Kaiser-Frazer, Kaiser Motors, Kaiser Willys or IKA. Thanks again for your efforts in keeping the independent automakers alive.

Tom Bassett
Sunderland, Massachusetts

I LOVED YOUR ARTICLE ON THE 1951 Henry J ("Smart, Tough, Thrifty," *HCC* #219), though not because I love Henry Js, and not because they were wonderful cars. I loved it because there was no mention of money. The Henry J was a throwaway car from the beginning. This [owner restored it] because he wanted to. Did he spend more than the car is worth? Absolutely! Probably two or three times what it's worth. That didn't matter—he loves the car, he had fun, and he saved a part of automotive history. Too much of our hobby is concerned with the money spent and how much the finished product can be flipped for. It's probably always been like that and always will be. It's refreshing to see an article about someone who restored a car because he loved the car, he loved what was doing, and he didn't care what it cost.

Mike Harrel
Denison, Texas

MARK McCOURT'S FINE PIECE ON the restored Henry J certainly brought back memories. As an eighth grader on Long Island in 1951, I had two jobs: as a paper boy and as a part-time evening and weekend delivery boy for a local pharmacy. As business grew, the pharmacy delivery job became more than could be handled by a grade schooler's limited hours. So, one evening I showed up for work and was introduced to the pharmacist's new Henry J and the retired gentlemen who had replaced me as deliveryman. Fortunately, though partially unemployed, my $25 Rollfast bike was paid for and still used on the paper route, which netted around three dollars a week in tip money. I guess I was an early victim of technological advances.

Charles Seltman
Colorado Springs, Colorado

REGARDING THE 1957 CHEVROLET V-8 engine confusion (Recaps, *HCC* #218): New for 1957 was the now-famous 283 engine, but why did a 265-cu.in. engine remain? The 1957 blocks and heads had a number of improvements. The same block casting was used for both the 265 and 283; the 265 was bored to 3¾ inches and the 283 was bored to 3⅞ inches. The 265 was used in passenger cars with a two-barrel carburetor and standard transmission with or without overdrive, and on ½-ton through 1½-ton trucks as the base eight-cylinder engine. It was called the economy V-8 engine. The 265 engine could also be bored out to 3⅞ inches, which would allow the 283 pistons to be installed.

For passenger cars the 265 was painted Chartreuse until 12-12-56 at the Flint engine plant and 1-11-57 at the Tonawanda engine plant; after that the engines were painted the traditional Chevrolet orange. Truck 265 engines were gray, while larger trucks with 283 engines had different colors for identification purposes. The six-cylinder 235-cu.in. truck engines were also gray and the passenger-car 235 engines were blue.

A few other comments: The 1956 265 was first to have the integral block-mounted oil filter. The 1957 heater could be a factory option or a dealer-installed accessory, but the radio was a dealer-installed accessory only.

Gene Schneider
West Allis, Wisconsin

MY DAILY DRIVER IS A 30-YEAR-OLD classic car, so I'm always interested in ways that others make changes to improve their driving experience. When I say it's my daily driver, I mean it: I average 5,000-6,000 miles annually driving my classic year-round, rain or shine, day and night.

I recently did a simple upgrade that doesn't get as much attention as it should. I upgraded my original headlamps to the newest halogen bulbs and the change was phenomenal! It cost under $50, took less than 30 minutes, and transformed my nighttime driving experience. My night vision improved dramatically as did my confidence and safety.

Perhaps an article on headlamp options and DIY would be in order?

On another subject, I'd be interested to know what the mpg is on some of the cars you profile, particularly the "Driveable Dreams." For cars occasionally driven, it's not a big deal, but for someone who enjoys the experience daily, gas mileage can be a deal breaker.

Keep up the good work!

Ken Stubert
Georgetown, Texas

I WAS READING DON MOORE'S letter in the December issue of *HCC* about the guys regrooving tires on used cars. When I was in the Navy and stationed at Corpus Christi, Texas, in the early '60s, I met a fellow who had a shop just outside of the base. He had a large box truck with an electric-powered machine mounted in the back, and he would drive around to the used car lots and regroove used tires.

The tire and rim would turn slowly while the grooving tool zig-zagged back and forth. I also seem to remember that the pattern could be changed to match the original shape of the tread.

This did not seem to be a homemade machine and it did a very nice job of making an old worn tire look almost new. So, Don, you are not the only one who remembers tire groovers.

Gaylen Hovanic
Oregon City, Oregon

"OOF! OUCH! GRUNT! GASP AND Wheeze…" is followed by Ollie's inevitable plea to Stan, "Why don't you do something to help me?!"

When I read Pat Foster's column, "American Austin" in the December issue (*HCC* #219), I immediately thought of this hilarious scene in Laurel & Hardy's 1931 short film, *Our Wife*, in which Stan is sent to get a rental car for Ollie and his equally

Continued on page 16

Continued from page 15

corpulent fiancée for their elopement and, of course, this Lilliputian roller skate was all he could come up with. Add to that their huge suitcase, plus Stan for a witness, and you have what we used to call a "Blivit," meaning, "Three pounds of stuff in a two-pound bag." This was, of course, a departure from their usual Model T Fords, which after being crushed by a streetcar, cut in half by a giant bandsaw, or subjected to some other ignominious treatment, always wound up in the scrap heap. While I realize this is somewhat after the fact, I strongly urge our readers not to, under any circumstances, consider selling any or their precious classics to these characters, as it appears that their track record for preserving vintage automobiles is quite poor.

Peter Lee
Via email

I WAS 11 YEARS OLD IN 1955 WHEN the Chrysler Corporation introduced its lineup of radically restyled cars. That started a lifelong interest in all things automotive that were different. I drove a well-used 1955 Plymouth and a 1955 Dodge in college in the '60s when the Ford and Chevy guys were getting jobs at the large chemical plant nearby and signing up for payments on Mustangs and Chevelle Super Sports. The 1960 Fury convertible in the December issue is certainly in the "different" category. I like it, but beautiful it is not. It is like a caricature of the 1957 models, with exaggerated features. I don't know what was going on at Plymouth in those days, but after producing this cartoon-like rendering of the Forward Look design for 1960, they decided to build something completely different for 1961. Wow, was it ugly, but because it is different, I like it! Kudos to everyone who preserves all the less popular makes and models.

Chuck Woodside
Schertz, Texas

I GREW UP IN A SMALL VILLAGE IN Wisconsin, right on the main highway linking Milwaukee to Janesville, longtime site of a GM assembly plant. Every September the school year started at the same time the new model-year cars being built in Janesville would appear. Because I walked to school along a stretch of that road, I would always get my first glimpse of the new Chevys as the car carriers zoomed by on their trip from Janesville to Milwaukee, where the new cars would be shipped all over the country. I loved feeling like I was the first person to see the redesigned grilles, bodies, and taillamps of the new year's models. The most memorable year, to me, was 1973, when the new mid-sized Colonnade models appeared. I still recall my first glimpse of a new Malibu wagon and thinking, "Wait, they put the taillamps *IN* the rear bumper? That's crazy! How do they make that work?" Soon after, we got a full-color advertising insert in our Sunday paper introducing the new Cutlass Colonnade models, and I was amazed at how radical—and how cool—they looked. If you haven't already, I'd love to see *Hemmings Classic Car* do a feature on the '73 Colonnades.

Mark O'Connell
Conyers, Georgia

I JUST FINISHED READING THE NO-vember issue (*HCC* #218) and I loved the article on the '60 Edsel ("The Elusive 'Sixty'"). I have been a member of the International Edsel Club since 1979 and I have owned several examples of the 1960 model. They are my favorite Edsel. I currently own a 1960 Edsel Villager wagon and I used to own a two-door hardtop similar to Doug's feature car. Mine was white with a turquoise top and interior.

There were a couple small errors in the statistics given on the '60 Edsel in that story. Under options, it states "remote hood release," but all '60 Edsels have the remote hood release under the dash. A remote trunk release was available for dealer installation. Doug's car also has the optional Deluxe Champagne Interior. This leads to the other error: The production figure for '60 hardtops is 295 cars, not 243 as listed. There were 243 built with the standard interior and another 52 with the Deluxe interior. This makes the feature car one of 52 if you break it down that way. The turquoise interior color was only available in the Deluxe version, which was originally going to be the Corsair model; however, the Corsair name was dropped before production began.

I have seen Doug's car in person—it's a beauty.

Dave Hooten
Racine, Wisconsin

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Time To Drive!

Monty Python sang "Always Look on the Bright Side of Life" at the end of the comedic troupe's controversial film, *The Life of Brian*. Ignoring the politics of church and state within the movie for a moment, if you took the song at face value—applying it to whatever happens during one's day—the outlandish lyrics make some sense. Especially for those of us in the northern climate anticipating the season's first storm system… of the frozen variety. The days of driving cherished vintage rides are officially suspended. Probably for the next six months. What's one to do?

Admittedly, winter weather driving can be entertaining. I honed my own car control skills courtesy of an imported rear-wheel-drive platform during those times in the midst of a snowstorm when absolutely nobody else was on the road within miles. Who knew a diesel-fed straight-six paired with a five-speed manual could make Jim Rockford green with envy? That kind of country cul-de-sac hijinks, repeated with ceaseless hilarity, thankfully went unnoticed by the neighbors. That included a perfect silhouette of the right-front flank implanted into a snowbank.

Back then, "telecommuting" was a rarity, but school snow days were not. This points out that a positive impact brought on by the pandemic was mitigating the need to slog through another snowy commute, thanks to our seemingly newfound remote work capabilities. I can sit at a laptop and type this column instead of plodding my way up a mountain road, hoping some kid in a six-cylinder, rear-wheel-drive import isn't careening at me in a white-knuckled panic.

Nearly four decades after my first days of drifting around the neighborhood in newly fallen snow, and that much wiser, my downtime no longer consists of removing near-glaciated wheels after a day of misguided fun, but rather embarking on a driving tour from the comfort of my house, courtesy of a card game called Touring.

The game could best be described as a collision-filled, tire-puncturing good time in which the only consequence is finishing last. It was conceived in 1906 by the New York-based Wallie Dorr Company as a 110-mile race managed by luck-of-the-draw from a deck of 100-cards. Accumulating the necessary miles to win was as simple as playing a series of Mile cards, after starting with a Go card.

One could besiege fellow players with a string of Delay cards that littered the dastardly deck. Among them were Collision cards that require Hauled In and Go cards. The Out of Gas card necessitated Gasoline and Go cards. Puncture was the easiest to overcome with a Go card. Initial Delay cards also carried mileage penalties.

Several slight upgrades of the game were released after Touring was acquired by Parker Brothers in 1925. Those changes were chiefly box and card designs until 1957, when Mile cards were updated to reflect "modern" driving practices.

Another update occurred in '65, not only to Mile cards, but also Delay cards, while overall trip length was extended in both instances.

Touring can consume only handfuls of winter hours, though. The quashed desire to drive vintage vehicles needs to be pacified by supportive means. So, I look on the bright side of life and like others, I turn to the pages of this title, where I briefly live vicariously through the adventures of fellow enthusiasts, some of whom have logged what others may perceive to be an alarming number of miles.

> "I turn to the pages of this title, where I briefly live vicariously through the adventures of fellow enthusiasts."

Take George Burbage and his 1972 Pontiac LeMans, which appeared in the November issue (*HCC* #218). On nothing more than a whim, George has had no qualms piloting his cherished four-door sedan on 40-mile round trips just to get a beverage. In the December issue, Marlene White told us she acquired her 1967 Mustang in 2019, and has filled her summers with car shows since, eager to educate others about the truly rare dealer installed "Branded" package that adorns her Ford. And then there was Paul Dutton, who shared the tale of his Canadian-built 1966 Studebaker Daytona Sport Sedan in the January issue (*HCC* #220). Purchased at the 2017 Studebaker International Meet, Paul's driven it 23,000 miles since.

In a way, those miles pale in comparison to the 100,000-plus the 1973 Chrysler Town & Country, featured in this issue, is believed to have travelled since new. Or the 288,000-plus miles my dad and I rolled onto that imported, rear-wheel-drive, straight-six diesel that taught me a thing or two about winter driving. Stories like this all inspire us to get out and drive in 2023.

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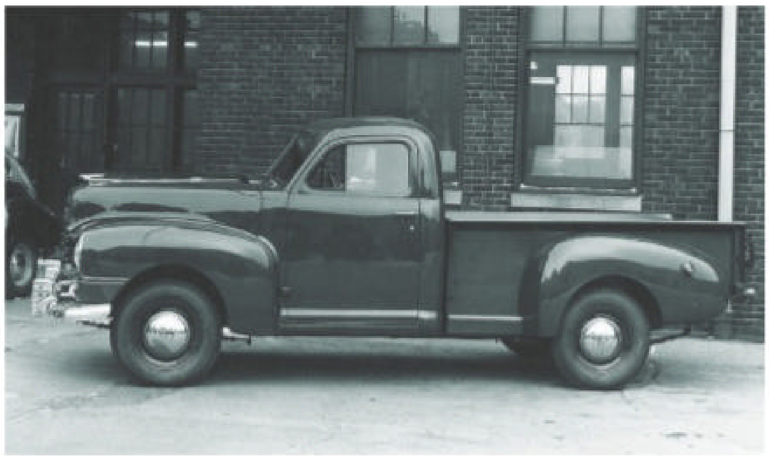
The Nash Pickup

> "The 1940s were very profitable years for the Little Five."

Would Nash-Kelvinator have done better if World War II never happened? Conventional histories have usually said the American Independent automakers were helped by that conflict, not hurt. That's because the Independents were awarded lucrative contracts for war materiel that gave them decent profits while enabling them to vastly improve their tools, machinery, and production facilities. That certainly was the case with Willys-Overland, winner of the Jeep contract along with a mountain of other war work. Willys was an insignificant company in the 1930s, but by the end of the war, it had completely modernized its factory and machinery. It also gained the one automotive product—Jeep—that it could sell without worrying about competition.



Studebaker and Hudson also made out well in the war; Packard less so because it took on very difficult and costly production jobs that probably weren't as profitable as they should have been. Nash did pretty well, even though it kept its profit margin on war work very low, out of a sense of patriotism.

One unhappy result of the war, which arose in the postwar automotive market, proved both a curse and a blessing: Postwar demand for new cars soared to stratospheric heights, and that's when all the Independents, Nash included, were able to make tremendous profits that helped build up their capital reserves and strengthen their balance sheets. So, it's true the 1940s were very profitable years for the Little Five.

But a result of all that demand was that some new automotive introductions were delayed and finally cancelled because the automakers couldn't acquire enough parts and components to build enough of the cars they already had, let alone some new product. Willys, for example, had an all-new car ready to introduce in 1946 but was never able to produce it due to a lack of steel, components, and materials.

But in my opinion, Nash was hurt the most. The company, eager to grow its sales volume, investigated the pickup market and decided the time was ripe to enter. Using the front clip from a Nash sedan, company engineers developed a great-looking pickup that was both roomy and solid. It was built on a Nash convertible frame and featured an amply proportioned pickup body; it would have been a great addition to the truck market. In early 1946, Nash was reported to be developing three truck models: ½-, ¾, and 1½-ton jobs. A March 1947 press release said the new trucks would soon go into production. However, by November 1948 the company reluctantly concluded that the truck project had to be postponed indefinitely.

In the end, the company did actually build trucks, though mostly heavy-duty models in small numbers and almost exclusively for the export market. Called the Nash "Haul-Thrift" line, the new trucks were offered in one-ton and 1½-ton versions, on two wheelbases: 133 inches and 157 inches. Powered by the potent Ambassador six-cylinder engine, they were rugged and seemed to last forever. I recall interviewing a former Nash dealer in New Hampshire who finally junked his Nash Haul Thrift around 2008; he said when he checked on it a week later, a restorer had bought it from the scrapyard.

If you're wondering what a dealer in New Hampshire was doing with a Nash truck, the answer is the company allowed its dealers to order these rare pickups for use as service wreckers for their dealerships. The orders were strictly dealer-only—no retail sales were allowed. But of course, once the truck became older, dealers usually sold them—or junked them, depending on age and condition.

The bulk of the trucks were shipped overseas completely knocked down (CKD) for the local Nash affiliate to assemble, thus saving on import duties. For instance, truck kits shipped to Canada were assembled by Nash Motors of Canada, and kits shipped to Mexico were assembled by the local Nash assembly plant. A variety of work bodies could be fitted.

Nash produced a tad over 5,000 trucks from 1947 to 1955, with about 300 reserved for U.S. dealers, along with a small number that Nash kept as service vehicles and parts runners for its assembly plants.

So, if World War II hadn't caused the unnatural postwar demand, Nash-Kelvinator could have gotten into the light truck market in a big way. It's a shame that didn't happen.

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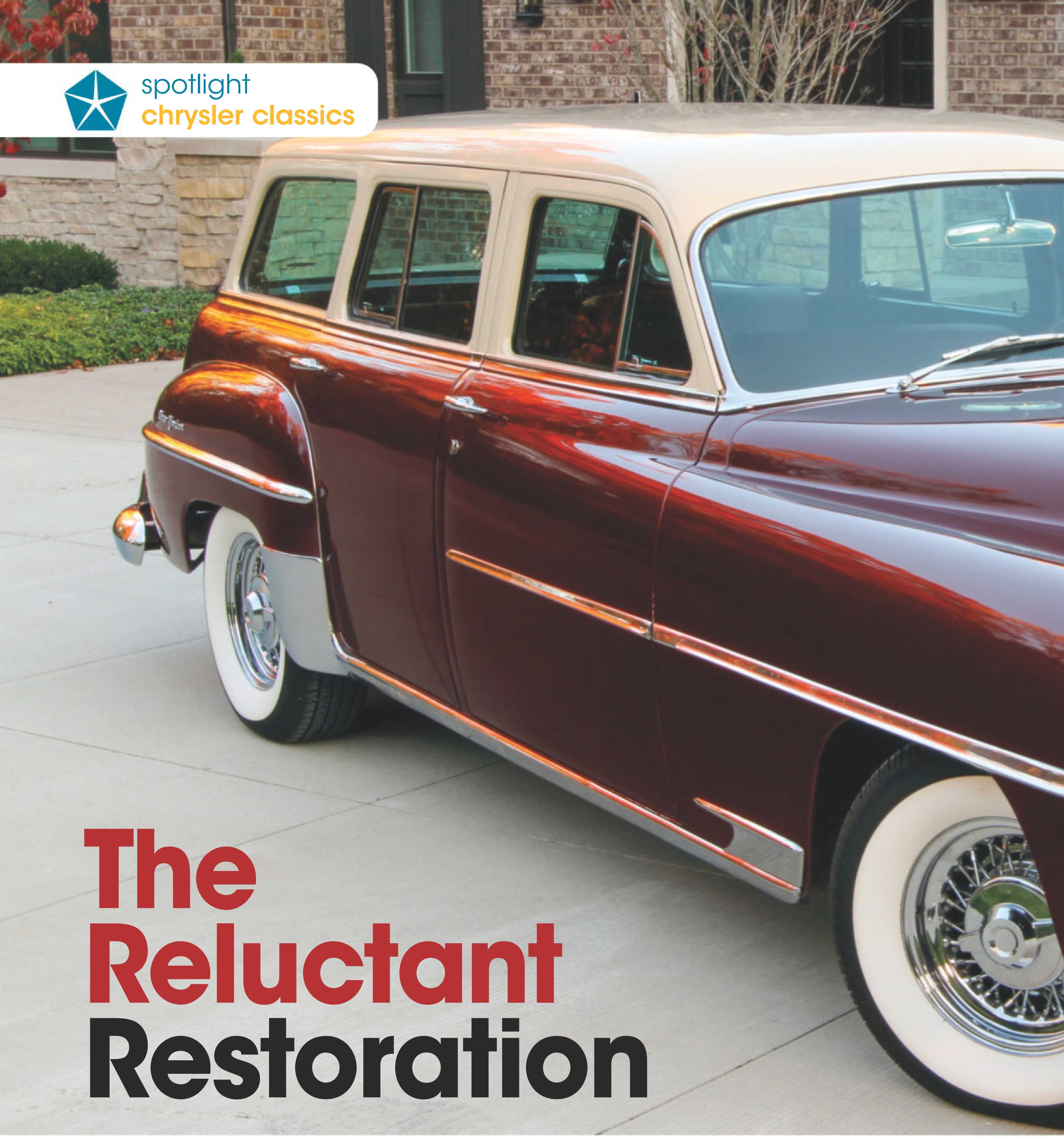
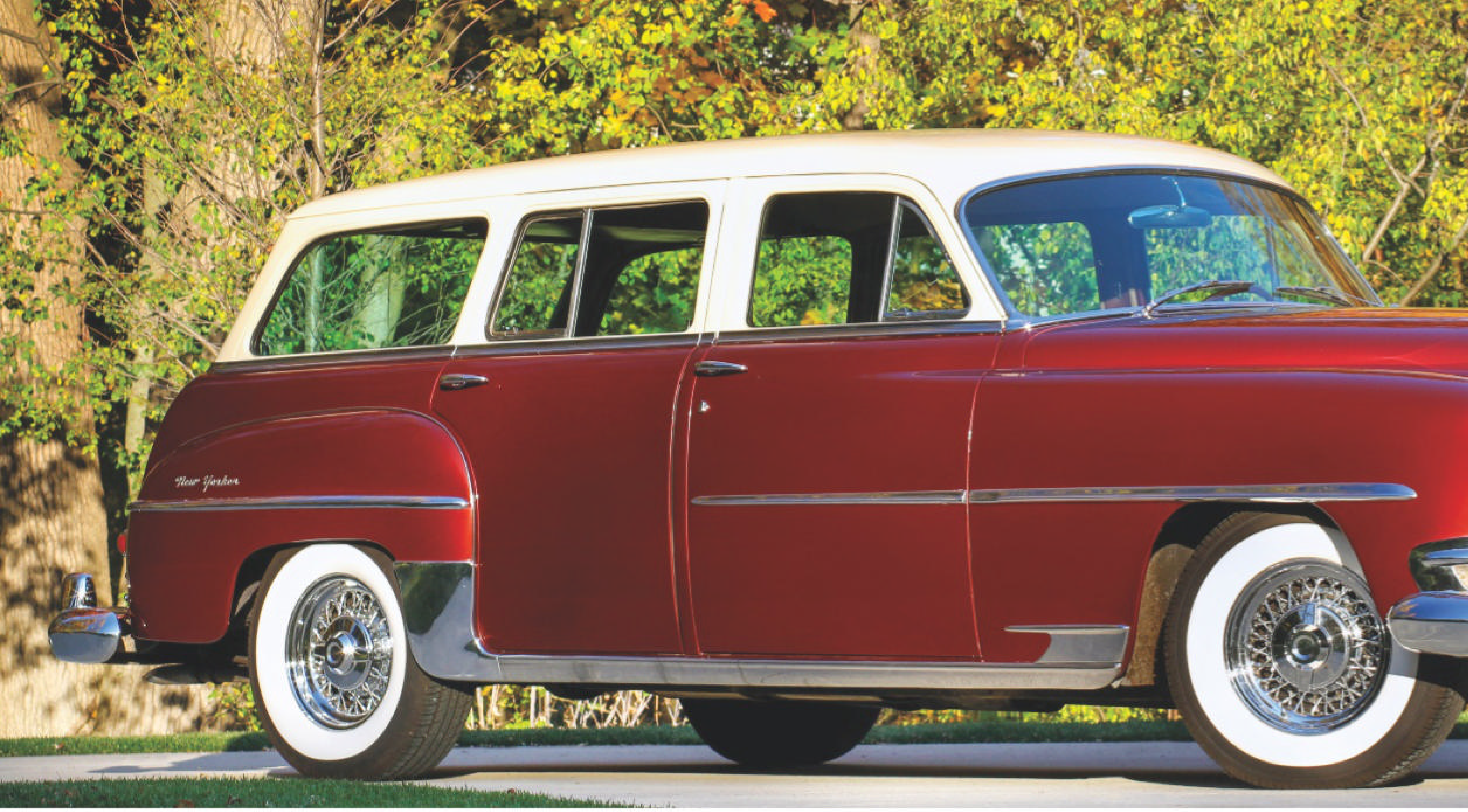


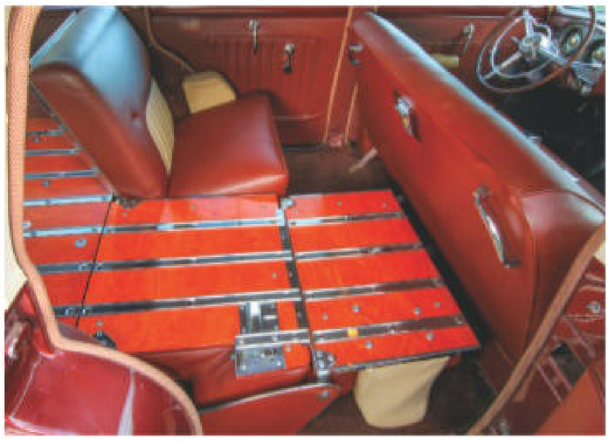
The Reluctant Restoration

This 1954 New Yorker Town & Country found its way to a retired Chrysler Corp designer

WORDS AND PHOTOGRAPHY BY BARRY KLUCZYK

Most designers aspire to leave a lasting impression with their work, and for more than 35 years in the Chrysler Design studio, Diran Yazejian did just that. With a career that began in 1959 and stretched to 1995, he penned the exterior details for countless production models—mostly for Dodge. For example, that iconic vertical





POWER STEERING

YEAH, IT'S GOT A HEMI

grille divider that makes the 1969 Charger instantly identifiable? You can thank Diran.

His immersion in Chrysler's culture during his career extended beyond the design studio, when he began collecting and restoring vintage Mopars. Plenty came and went from his suburban Detroit garage over the decades, but it currently houses a 1934 Dodge cabriolet, a 1957 Dodge Crown Royal convertible, and the subject of this story: a 1954 New Yorker Town & Country.

It's a comparatively rare station wagon, with only about 1,100 built. With a base price of $4,023, it wasn't the most inexpensive wagon on the market. It offered plenty of luxury and advanced features, including optional power brakes, power steering, and Airtemp air conditioning. A split-folding rear seat and a nicely finished wood cargo area with chrome trim were also part of the package.

The New Yorker model came standard with the FirePower Hemi engine, which elevated the car to the upper echelon of performance for the era, while the lower-rung Windsor Deluxe Town and Country trim was offered solely with Chrysler's stalwart L-head "Spitfire" inline-six. The 331-cubic-inch Hemi was rated at 195 horsepower, but some of that power was sapped by the enormous compressor of the air-conditioning system, which did not have a decoupling clutch.

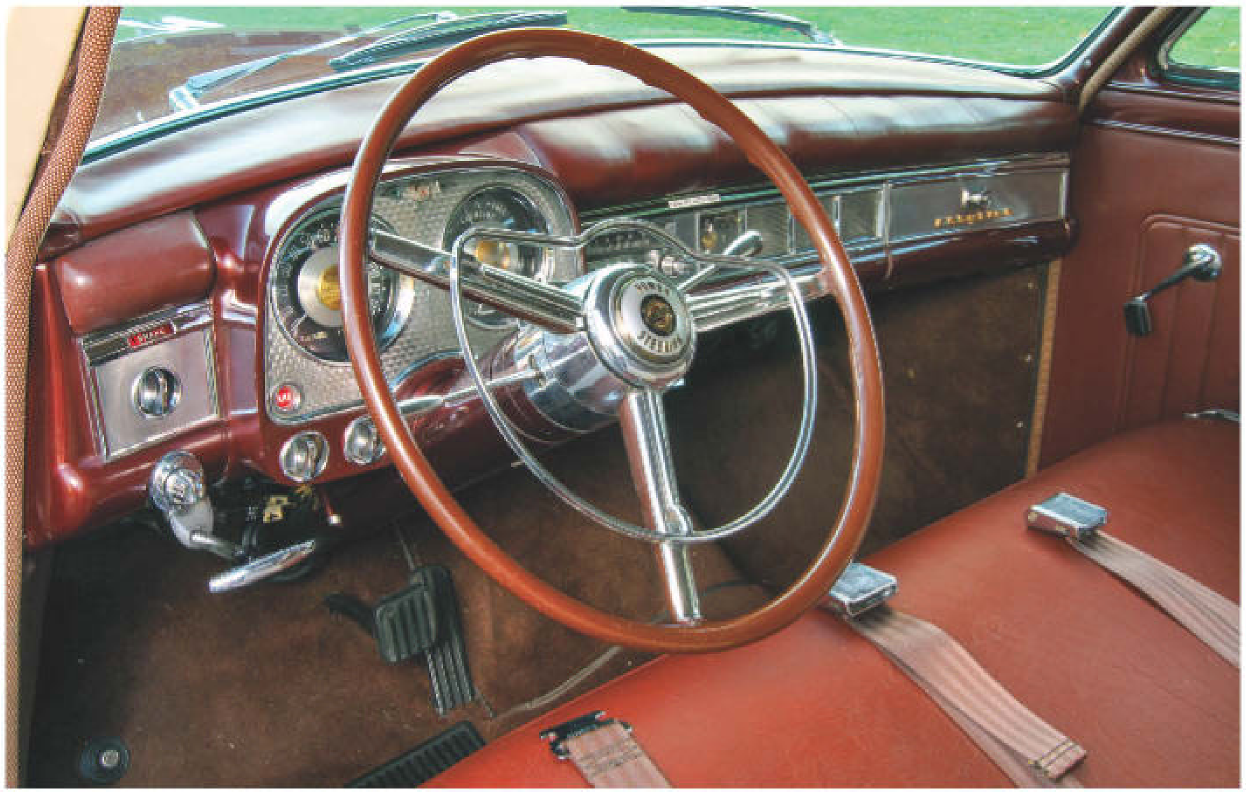
Diran's example indeed has air conditioning, along with all the other amenities, but despite its rarity and distinctive features, it's a car he didn't seek. In fact, it found him—and was essentially left at his doorstep.

It was about 20 years ago, at which time the Chrysler belonged to a friend who lived nearby. He'd owned it for about 15 years and had commissioned its restoration. Work had progressed significantly before the restorer's marriage and business dissolved. The car was returned painted and partially assembled, but a couple of the crucial parts had gone missing: The virtually irreplaceable tailgate and the also impossible-to-find, wagon-specific rear bumper brackets.

The restoration went into stasis for about a decade, with a piece of plywood covering the tailgate opening. Realizing he wasn't going to finish the project, the friend approached the retired designer.

"He knocked on the door one evening and basically said, 'You have to buy my car,'" Diran says. "I wasn't sure what to say at first, because I wasn't looking for another restoration project and there was very much that still needed to be done with the wagon, but I couldn't say no."

There was good reason for his trepidation. Despite the body already being painted Tahitian Tan, most of the rest of the car was in boxes. There was also the issue of locating a tailgate



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owner's view

For a car I was never looking for, my wife Joyce and I have enjoyed it immensely. It's not something you see every day, so it definitely draws a crowd when we take it to shows. It drives as well as any car from its era and all the unique features means there's always something to talk about at the shows. I'm very glad this Town and Country found me. —*Diran Yazejian*

and the bumper brackets. The windshield, too, needed to be replaced, and the rare air-conditioning system needed some parts.

Oh, and the engine needed an overhaul and the two-speed PowerFlite automatic transmission didn't like to shift out of low gear until it was really warm.

It was a daunting list of needs, but Diran drew upon more than 20 years of restoration experience. He had also honed his parts-hunting skills to a fine art, and it wasn't long before he'd tracked down two tailgates, the bumper brackets, air conditioning parts, and a new windshield. He found the first tailgate in Minnesota and shortly thereafter found another in super-dry New Mexico.

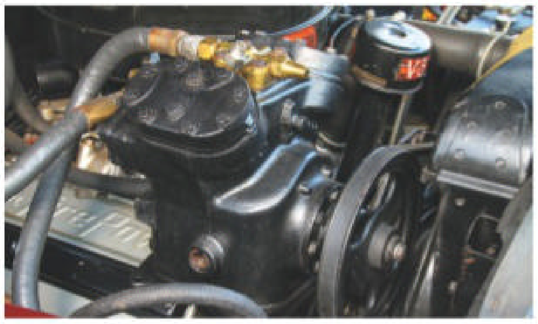
The New Mexico tailgate was installed and the other remains were safely stashed in his parts collection. Because the tailgate would require painting, it provided the opportunity to change the entire look of the car with a new primary color.

"I wasn't a fan of Tahitian Tan as the car's only color," Diran says. "It was fine as an accent for the upper body and roof, but I wanted something else for the primary color."

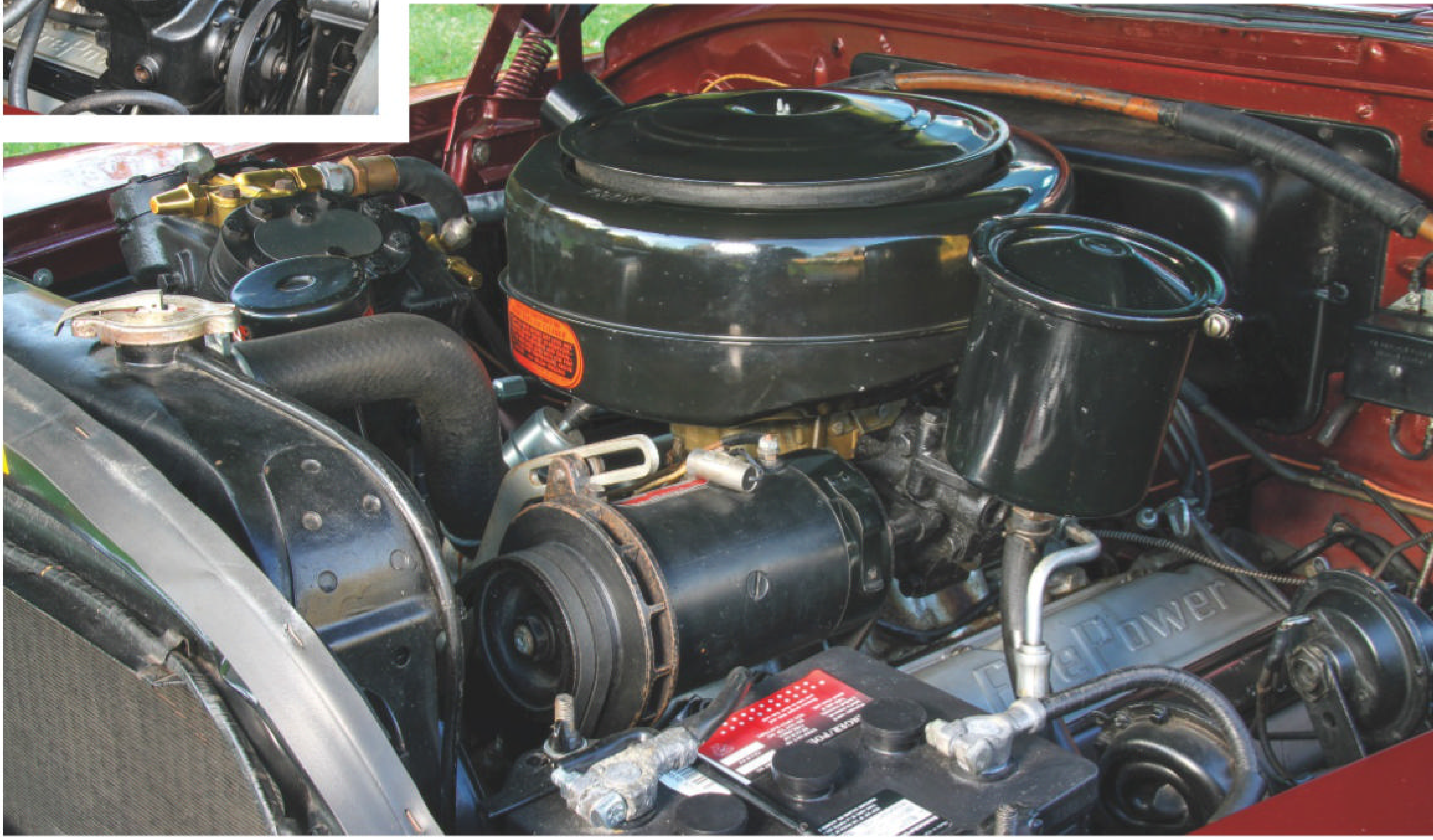
After looking at a 1954 Chrysler color chart, he chose Cordovan Brown and had the car changed to a two-tone appearance that would have been available for the model year. The new windshield was installed at the time of the paint job.

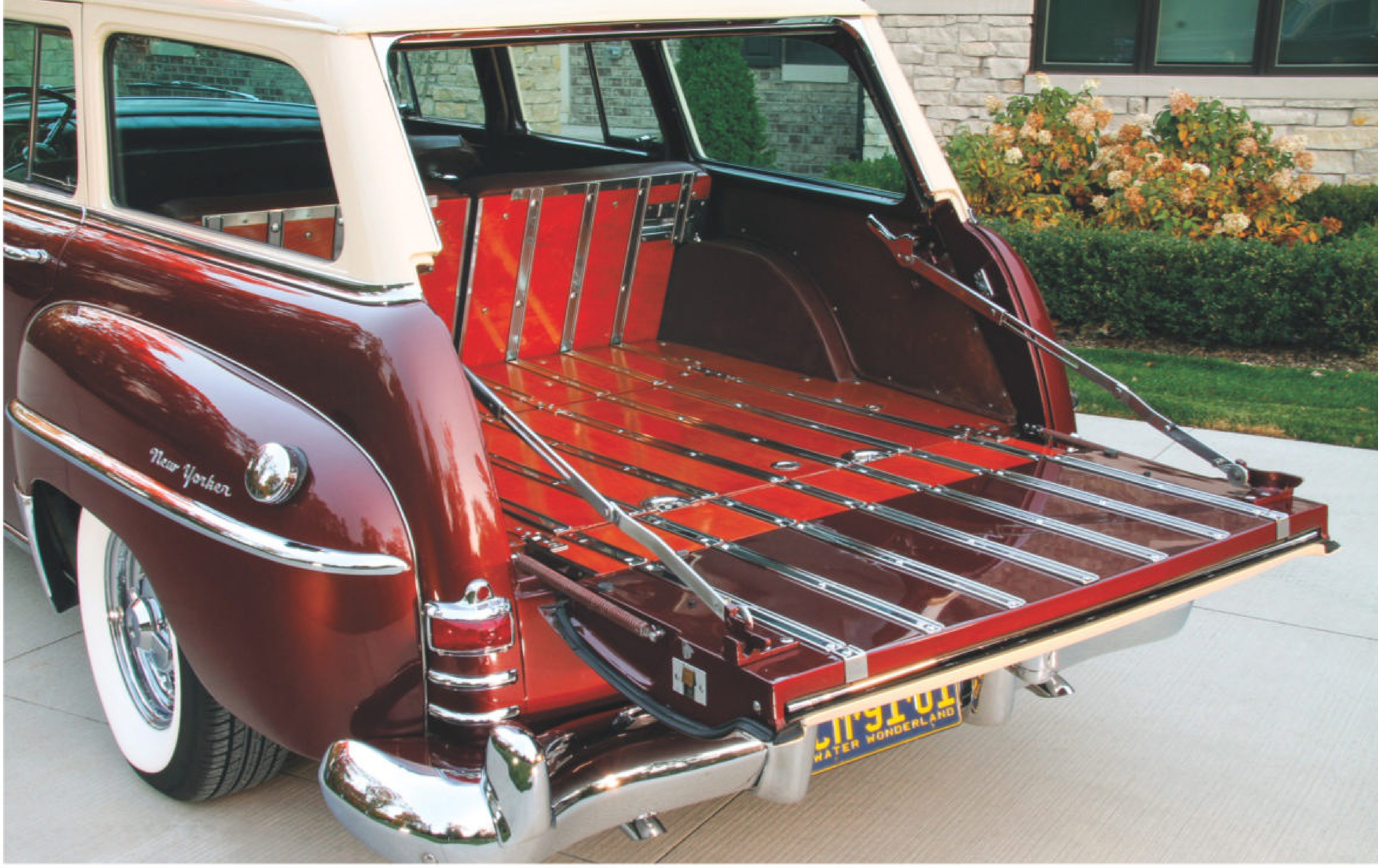
Inside, the Town and Country's distinctive wood cargo floor was one of the areas that had already been restored and it looked great, but the seats required recovering, along with the need for new carpet and a headliner, which were custom-made. Diran himself remade the vinyl upper and lower dash pads, which included recreating vertical pleats in the lower pad with the edge of a hot piece of steel. Conversely, the door panels and cargo area side panels are original and appear remarkably well-preserved for their age.

When it came to the powertrain, Diran had the transmission rebuilt and tackled the Hemi's overhaul himself. He replaced the bearings and piston rings, lapped the valves, and generally freshened it up. Today, it starts with a flick of the key and idles smoothly, breathing easily through a Carter four-barrel carburetor. The car still runs off the factory 6-volt electrical system, too, which means it retains the original generator. It's a necessity, as the generator drives the power-steering pump.

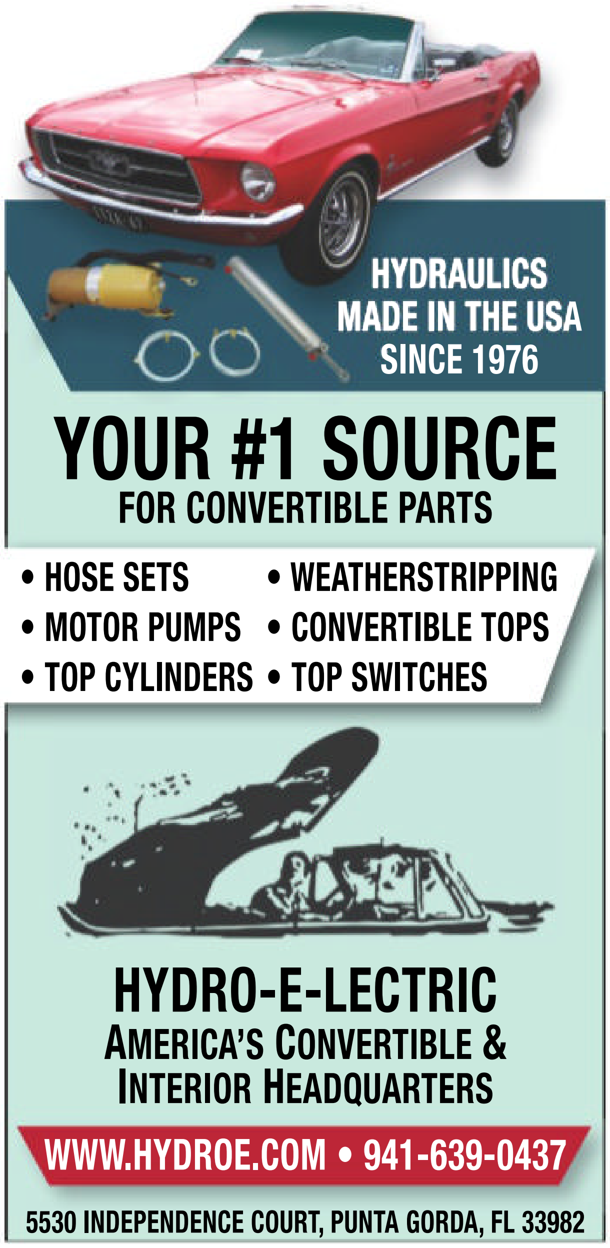


To support the high pressure required for R-22 refrigerant, the Airtemp compressor is a huge four-cylinder unit, requiring a unique notched air-cleaner housing for clearance.





A hand crank for the rear window provides inside access to two latches that allow the tailgate to lower.



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Town and Country

AIR CONDITIONED BY Airtemp

As large and heavy as the generator/power steering pump combo is, it doesn't hold a candle to the mass and underhood real estate consumed by the enormous Airtemp air-conditioning compressor. According to Diran, the four-cylinder unit weighs nearly 80 pounds, making removal or installation nearly impossible for one person.

Interestingly, the system originally used R-22 refrigerant, unlike the R-12 used by other automotive systems. R-22 was the same refrigerant used in buildings and homes, which made sense because Chrysler-founded Airtemp got its start in the 1930s cooling office buildings. It was the system they knew. There was also no decoupling clutch for the system, meaning the compressor was turning whenever the engine was, but a solenoid kept the airflow circuit closed until the system was turned on, which helped reduce drag on the engine.

Clever details abound on the car. There's a remote release for the fuel filler cap (it was an option), a lockable external hand crank for the rear window, and an ingenious flap that folds down with the tailgate to bridge the gap between it and the cargo floor. It's a beautiful finishing detail and helps extend the cargo length from 75 inches with the tailgate up to 116 inches in length with it down.

One feature that's neither clever nor popular with Diran is the 17-gallon fuel tank, which is about 15 percent smaller than the tank on the lighter sedan models. It's because the spare tire is mounted beneath the cargo floor in the wagon body, intruding on the available space for the fuel tank.

"In a heavy car like this that doesn't have an overdrive transmission, the car knocks down about 12 mpg," Diran says. "With the smaller tank and lousy gas mileage, it means we stop more often for fill-ups, but the car runs really well, so you roll with it."

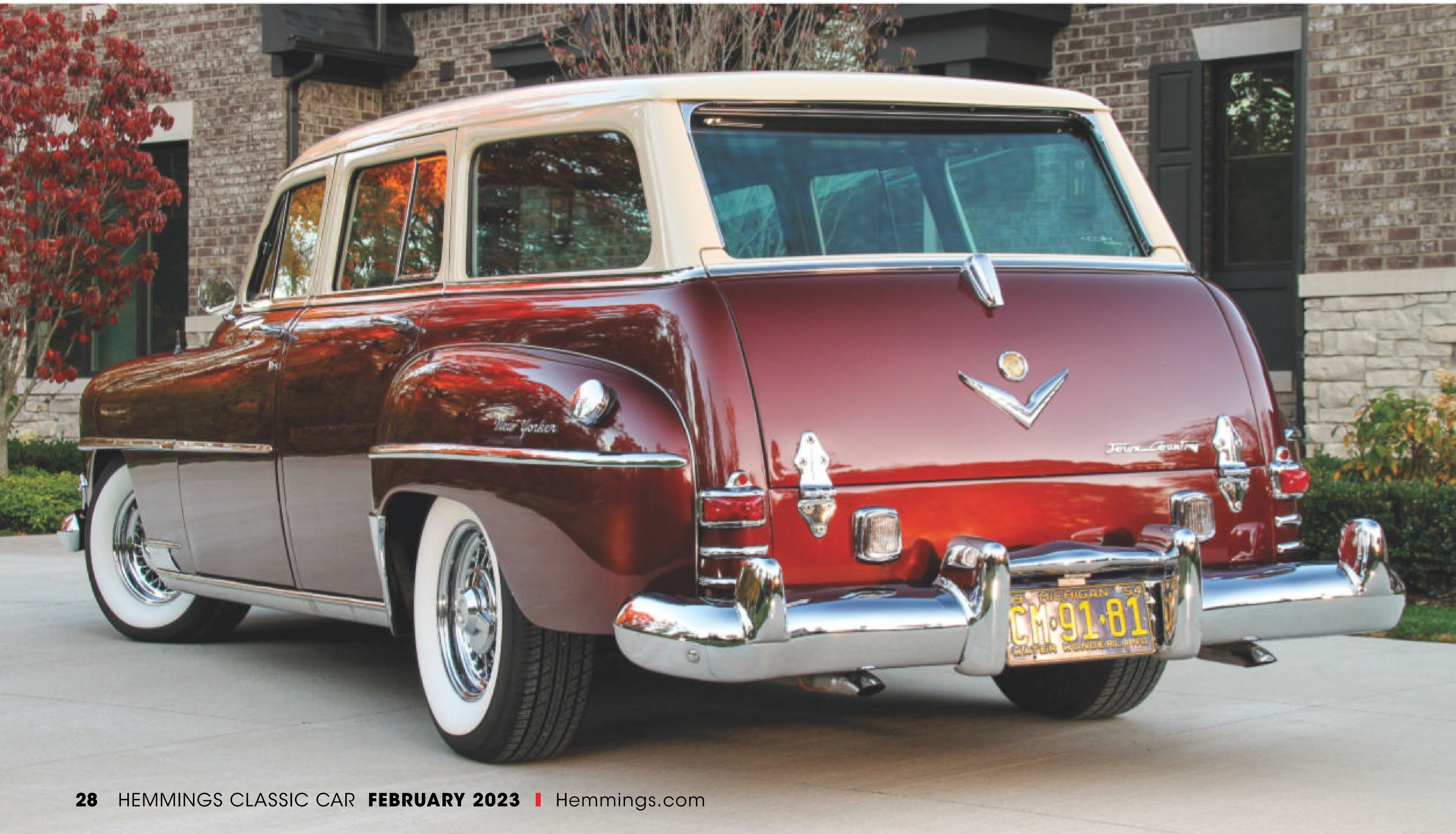
Diran and his wife Joyce are not shy about driving their classics, so the Town and Country sees its share of road time during the fair-weather months. They drive it to shows and other events, even if they're across the state.

"With only a two-speed, it definitely seems to want another gear, but we can cruise at about 65-70 mph," he says. "It doesn't use oil or run hot, either. It's very good on the highway."

A few years ago, Diran swapped the original-type bias-ply tires for radials, which are mounted on aftermarket wire wheels that match what was available for the car. They may provide more of a safety cushion on the highway, but he says that if he had to do it over, he'd keep the more original-looking bias-ply rubber.

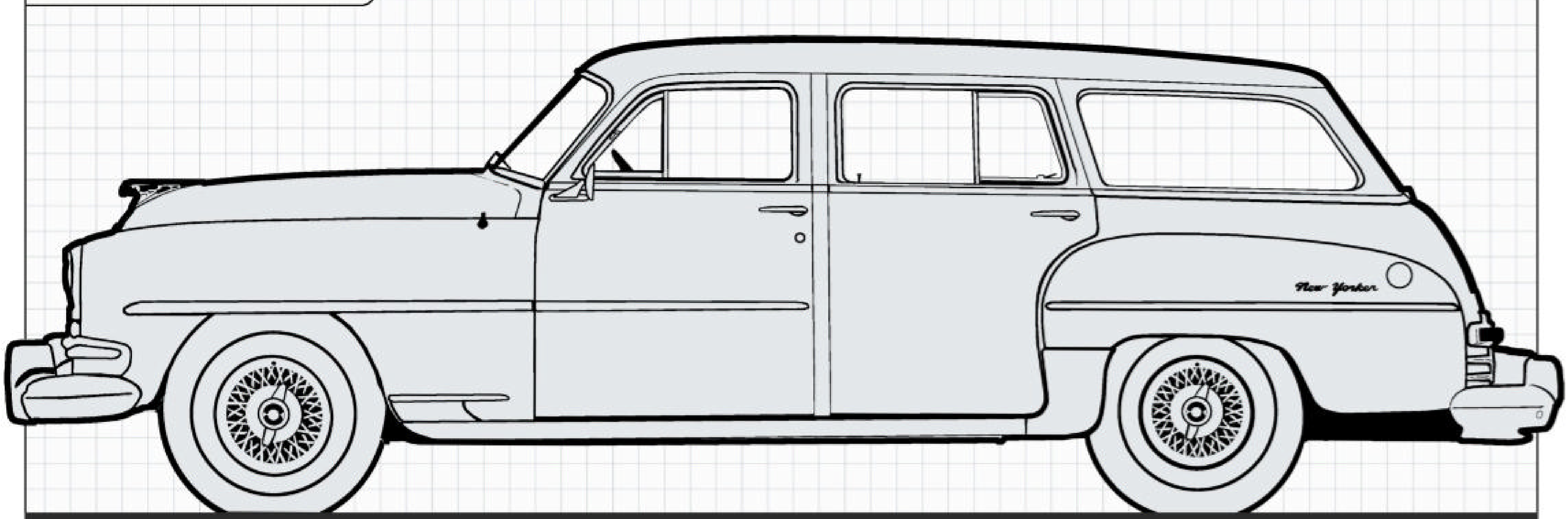
"I honestly didn't notice much of difference in the ride quality," he says. "I suppose they're better on the road, but I wouldn't mind going back to the bias-ply tires."

For a car he never planned to own, let alone restore, Diran Yazejian has forged a two-decade relationship with one of the rarest and most opulent luxury wagons of its era. He may not have had anything to do with its design, but by finishing this Town and Country's restoration, he unquestionably left his mark on it.



1954 CHRYSLER NEW YORKER TOWN & COUNTRY

ILLUSTRATION BY ROBERTA CONROY



SPECIFICATIONS

PRICE

BASE PRICE	$4,023
OPTIONS	Power steering, power brakes, PowerFlite automatic transmission, Airtemp air conditioning, remote fuel filler release, AM radio

ENGINE

TYPE	Chrysler FirePower OHV V-8, cast iron block and cylinder heads with hemispherical combustion chambers
DISPLACEMENT	331.1 cubic inches
BORE X STROKE	3.812 x 3.625 inches
COMPRESSION RATIO	7.5:1
HORSEPOWER @ RPM	195 @ 4,400 (gross)
TORQUE @ RPM	320 lb-ft @ 2,000 (gross)
VALVETRAIN	Hydraulic lifters with steel pushrods and steel rocker arms
FUEL SYSTEM	Carter four-barrel carburetor; mechanical fuel pump
EXHAUST SYSTEM	Cast-iron manifolds and dual exhaust outlets

TRANSMISSION

TYPE	Chrysler PowerFlite two-speed automatic
RATIOS	1st/1.72:1 2nd/1.00:1 Reverse/2.39:1

DIFFERENTIAL

TYPE	Semi-floating rear axle; hypoid gears
GEAR RATIO	3.54:1

STEERING

TYPE	Recirculating ball, power-assisted
TURNING CIRCLE	43.6 feet

BRAKES

TYPE	Hydraulic, power-assisted drum
FRONT	10 x 2-inch cast-iron drum
REAR	10 x 2-inch cast-iron drum

CHASSIS & BODY

CONSTRUCTION	Body-on-frame, all steel
BODY STYLE	Four-door, six-passenger station wagon
LAYOUT	Front engine, rear-wheel drive

SUSPENSION

FRONT	Independent; control arms, coil springs, direct acting Oriflow shocks and anti-sway bar
REAR	Solid axle; semi-elliptical leaf springs with interliners; direct-acting Oriflow shocks

WHEELS & TIRES

WHEEL	Steel rim with wire center section
FRONT/REAR	15 x 5 inches
TIRES	Bias-ply (original); radial (current)
FRONT/REAR	8.00-15 (original); P235/75R15 (current)

WEIGHTS & MEASURES

WHEELBASE	125.5 inches
OVERALL LENGTH	216.6 inches
OVERALL WIDTH	77.5 inches
OVERALL HEIGHT	62.7 inches
FRONT TRACK	56.3 inches
REAR TRACK	59.6 inches
CURB WEIGHT	4,250 pounds (approx.)

CALCULATED DATA

BHP PER CU.IN.	0.59
WEIGHT PER CU.IN.	12.8 pounds

PRODUCTION

For the 1954 model year, Chrysler produced an estimated 1,100 New Yorker Town and Country models.

PERFORMANCE*

0-60 MPH	12.3 seconds
¼-MILE ET	19.1 seconds @ 77 mph

* Listed results are from a road test of a 1954 Chrysler New Yorker Deluxe four-door equipped with a 235-hp 331-cu.in. engine, automatic transmission, and a 3.54:1 final drive ratio, published in *Motor Trend*'s March 1954 issue.

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1928-1931 Ford
Model A
Tudor

Almost a century later, the Model A is still one of the easiest cars there is to own

BY DAVID CONWILL • PHOTOGRAPHY FROM THE HEMMINGS ARCHIVES

The easiest collector cars in the world to own are those you can get the most parts for. You can probably name a lot of them: the '55-'57 Chevy, the early Mustang, the first-generation Camaro, the Triumph TR6, the MGB, and so on. As grows the hobby, so does that list (as do the criteria for being on it—which now includes complete reproduction steel bodies), but since the beginning, included the 1928-'31 Ford Model A.

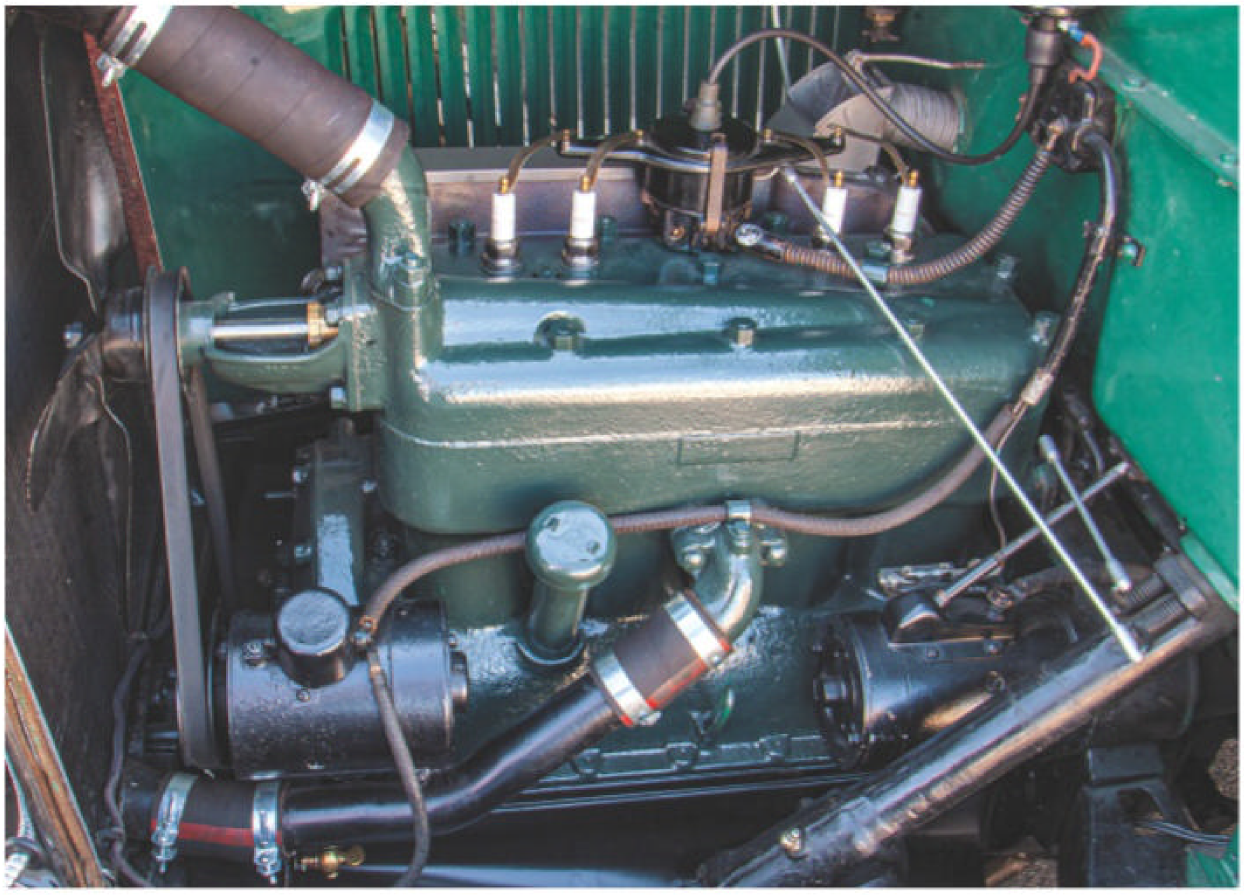
The complete history of the Model A as a sensational new car, its proven durability during the worst of conditions of the Great Depression and World War II, and its popularity as a simple and easily improved used car in the shortage-wracked postwar period, are too detailed to get into here, but suffice it to say that the historical popularity of the A translates to an extremely robust and complete aftermarket still supporting these cars on the eve of their centennial. Even in as-delivered form, the Ford Model A remains an eminently driveable car—married with some improvements developed when it was nearly new, it can traverse virtually any 21st century road with ease.

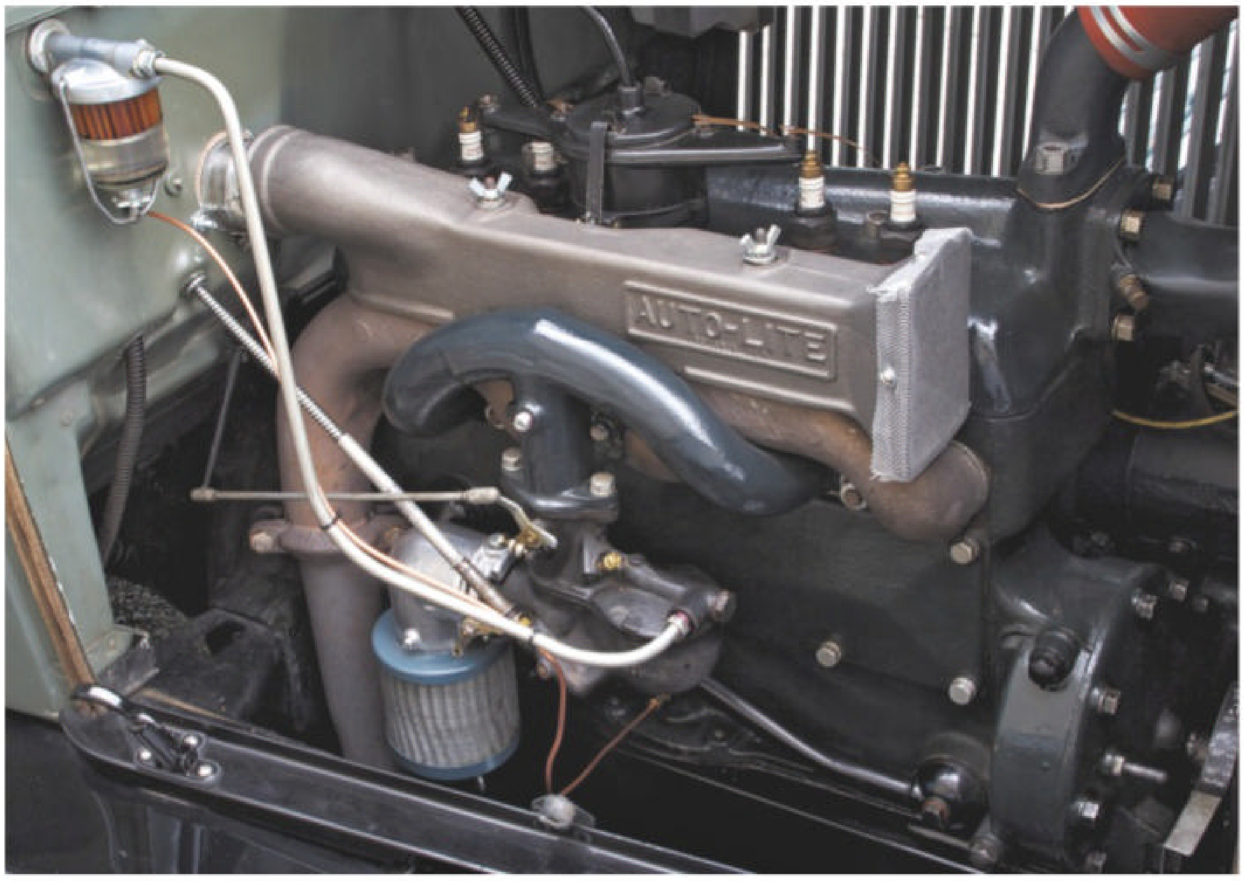
There are plenty of opportunities to do so, too. Two clubs serve the Model A hobby specifically: The Ford Model A Restorers Club (MARC) and the Model A Ford Club of America (MAFCA). They maintain technical libraries, advisors, and most importantly, communities of enthusiasts with whom to trade ideas, tribal knowledge, parts, and information. Both organizations are variously tolerant of modifications pioneered in the A's earliest days as a used car, especially when the appearance is kept stock or made to resemble a period speedster or race car.

Many of those changes blend seamlessly into a road-ready car, ideal for participating in tours like those organized by MARC, MAFCA, and the local chapters thereof, plus multi-marque events run by other organizations. Moreover, unless you live in a really congested area, a touring-grade Model A makes a great fair-weather driver for any purpose—assuming your insurance provider and licensing authority agree.

Speedsters and more heavily modified cars will find themselves welcome at other sorts of events, including hill climbs and traditional hot rod gatherings like The Race of Gentlemen. Beware, though: Beyond a certain point, the more heavily modified the engine, the more temperamental it becomes and the shorter its lifespan.

The standard Ford closed body for all years of production was the two-door sedan (spelled Tudor by Ford, to complement its naming the four-door sedans Fordor). It also proved the most popular in original production, with 523,922 built in calendar-year 1929 alone (Ford didn't track body-style production by model year) and 1,281,112 by the end of '31 production in early 1932. Most in-demand today are the roadster and coupe bodies. The former is reproduced, and though repair panels are obtainable, no complete closed Model A body is. A late-1928 to 1931 Tudor makes perhaps the ideal Model A owner's car for a variety of reasons, not least of which is the prospect of extra leg room in the front seats, attractive price point in the current market, and an all-steel body (compared with the wood-framed Fordors, built by outside suppliers). It's on that specific model that we'll focus here.





Accessories to increase horsepower or otherwise improve Model A performance have been around since the A was new. Note the add-on fuel and air filters on the lower engine, plus an Auto-Lite branded heater attached to its exhaust manifold.

ENGINES AND DRIVETRAIN

While it's a flathead four-cylinder, and parts from the Model A engine have been made to work in the Model T block, there's not much in common between the 177-cu.in. Model T engine and the 1928-'31 Model A engine, which displaced 200 cu.in. and made 40 hp at 2,200 rpm—twice the T's 20 hp at 1,600 rpm. Famously, one reason the Model A is often seen wearing a quail radiator mascot is because its abrupt acceleration reminded operators of that bird bursting forth from the underbrush. The four-cylinder retained its reputation for quick starts right up through the V-8 era, when owners of "bangers" preferred to race from a standing or low-speed rolling start (the origin of the drag race) against V-8 owners. The V-8's longer-legged nature was reflected in the popularity of the greyhound mascot on '32-'34 Fords.

In its stock form with a heavy flywheel, the Model A engine remains a roadable unit, though it's hard for most owners of driven cars to resist internal improvements when rebuild time comes along. Upgrades to the oiling system are popular, as are counterweighted Model Bcrankshafts (which permit a lightened flywheel and installation of a later clutch). Replacement of the poured bearings with modern-type inserts are frequently discussed, but probably overkill on anything but an engine regularly driven hard.

Top-end modifications, including additional carburetors (both stock-style updraft and later-style downdraft), high-compression (this is relative—stock used a 4.22:1 ratio) cylinder heads, high-performance camshafts, and free-flowing exhaust manifolds all exist and are of varying utility depending on the owner's intended use of a Model A. Some more compression (Ford itself offered a Police head, though aftermarket heads usually boasted a superior chamber design and more compression yet—anything in excess of 6.5:1 is not advised with poured bearings), a distributor incorporating centrifugal advance (stock units are driver-adjusted from the steering wheel—not a situation favored by every modern driver), a Model B-grind camshaft, a downdraft two-barrel carburetor (Stromberg types being a good compromise between period tech, flexibility, and present-day parts availability), and a cast-iron exhaust manifold will give a healthy enough boost to any engine that you may wish to look into some of the brake upgrades discussed below.

Some A owners have gone even further than modifying the factory engine, yet without straying all the way into V-8 territory. More than one Model A has received, complete, the 50-hp four-cylinder engine originally found in a 1932-'34 Ford Model B. Aside from an external fuel pump, the Model B block looks very much like the Model A, yet it hosts oiling improvements and a counterbalanced crankshaft. Opinions diverge on whether the earliest 1932s had the balanced crank, but the real split in desirability seems to stem from Ford's switch from sweated-on to cast-in counterweights, the latter of which aid immensely in rebuilding.

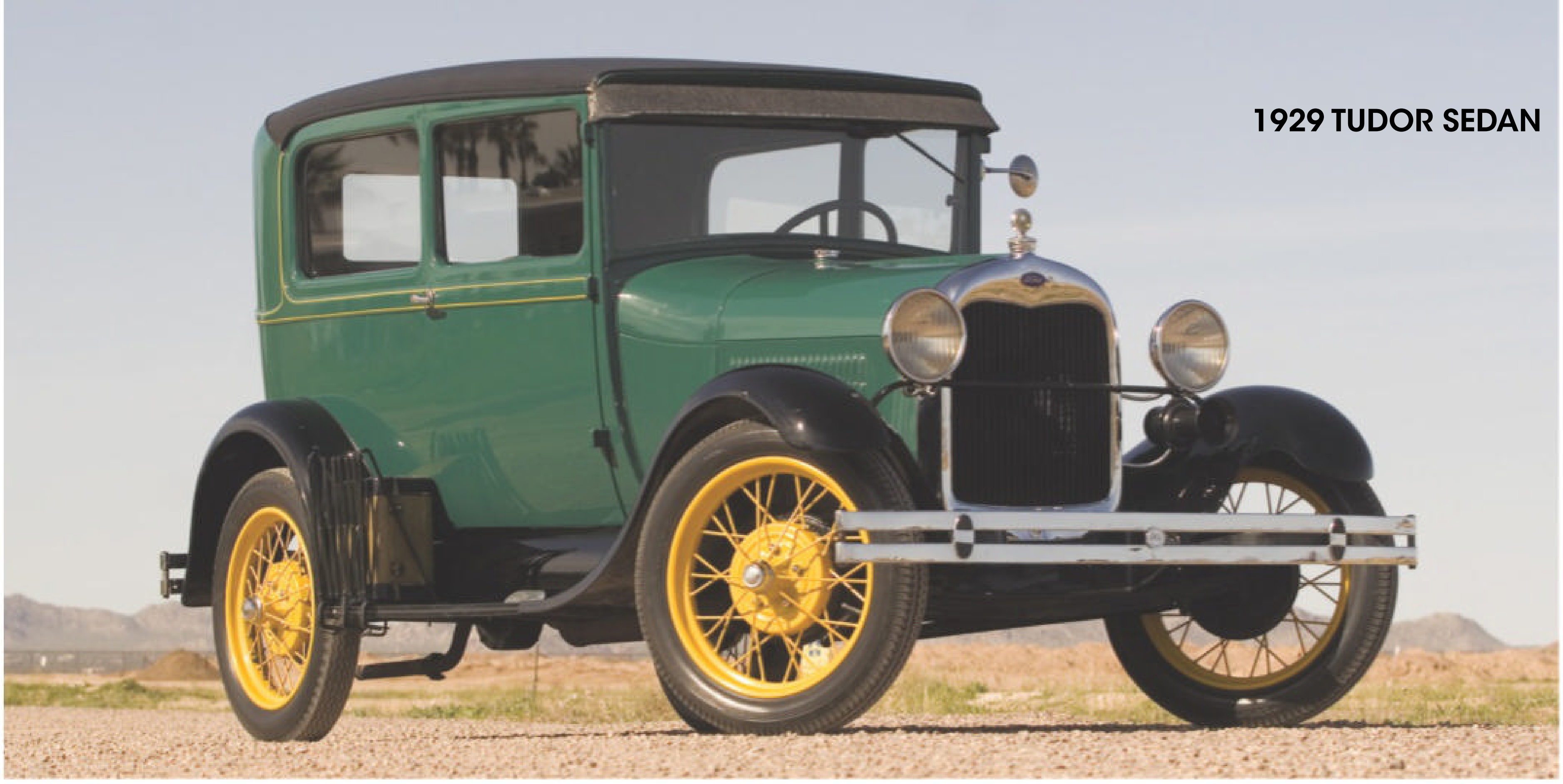
The Model B engine was originally packaged with a heavily revised transmission. The original Model A unit was scaled down

PARTS PRICES

Hood	$550
Plain front fender	$525
Welled front fender	$675
1930 running boards and splash aprons	$430/pr
Rear fenders	$800/pr
Cylinder head (new, 5.5:1 compression)	$359
Generator-look 6V, pos.-ground alternator	$328
Hydraulic brake conversion kit	$3,560
Lincoln self-energizing brakes w/o drums (front)	$425
Lincoln self-energizing brakes w/o drums (rear)	$575
Lincoln brake drums	$160 (ea)
F-100 steering box conversion	$1,095
Adapter for Ford V-8 transmission	$679
1932-style transmission crossmember	$599
Wheel spacers for hydraulic drums	$75/set of 4
Reproduction 19- or 21-inch wire wheel	$625 (ea)
Firestone 4.50-21 tire	$245
Firestone 4.75-19 tire	$249
Cast-iron exhaust header	$395
Single downdraft intake manifold	$225

1930 TUDOR SEDAN

Changes after late 1928 were mostly cosmetic. The 1930 redesign, which debuted right about the time of the 1929 stock market crash, widened the cowl (granting more foot room) and updated the styling, but the engine and chassis remained essentially unchanged.

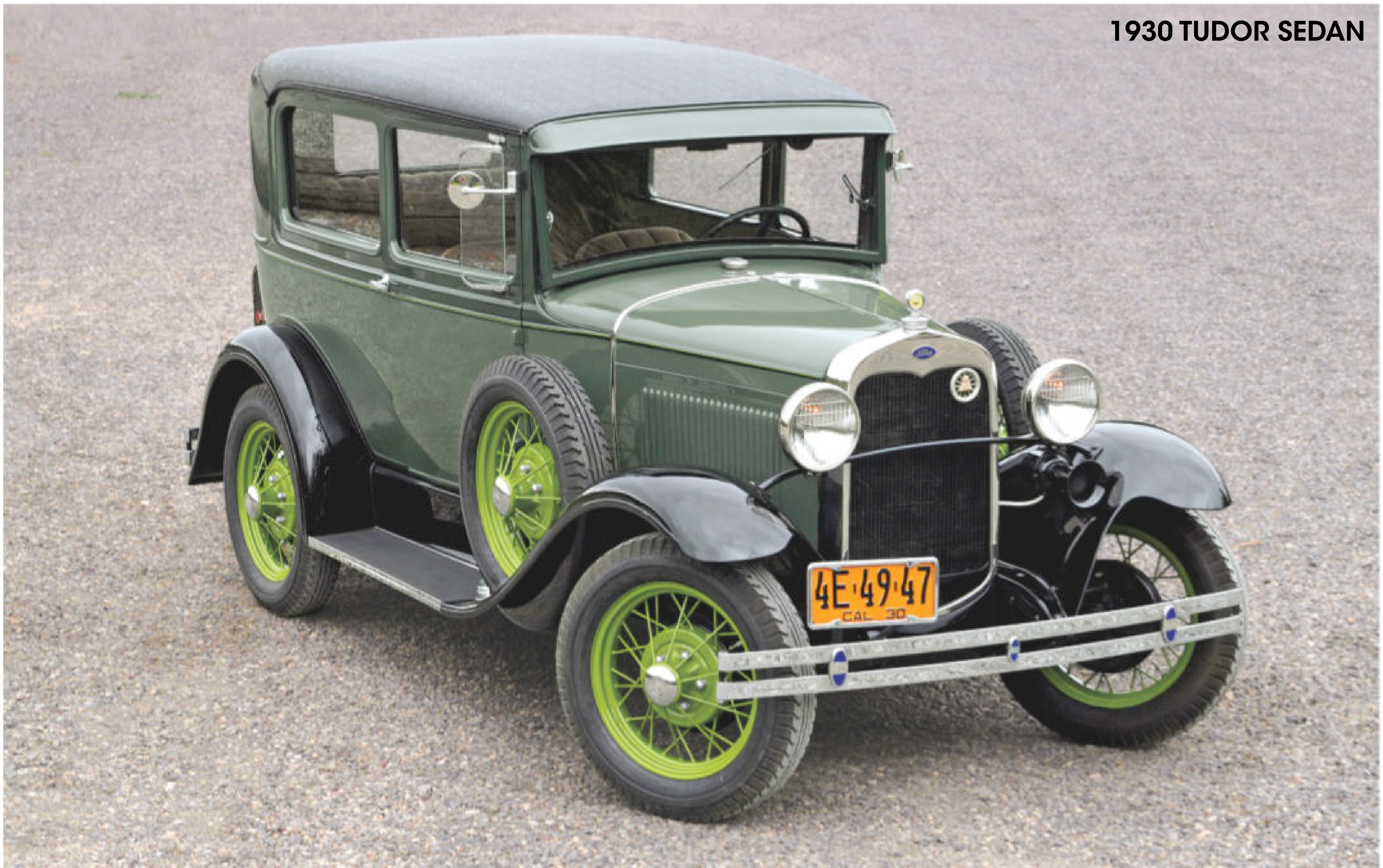


While the A started out relatively simple, buyers carried over their accessorization habits from the Model T. Note the running-board luggage rack on the car above and the Moto-Meter temperature gauges on both. Welled fenders were a factory contribution to this craze.

from the big Lincoln transmission in use in the late 1920s—complete with multi-plate clutch. That clutch was soon replaced with a conventional disc unit, but the heavy flywheel and unsynchronized gears remained. When synchromesh was introduced to the marketplace, however, the consumer wouldn't long stand for the necessity of double-clutching, and lighter flywheels had the added benefit of letting an engine gain rpm faster—though to the detriment of shifting unsynchronized transmissions.

For 1932, the Model B transmission was essentially that of the V-8 car, but in a gear case designed to work with the four-cylinder. In fact, gearsets from Ford passenger cars up through 1948 will fit in the Model B case, though it's tight. Because the Model A bellhousing also mounts its pedals, many B-powered A's will have been modified to accommodate the Model A oil pan, bellhousing, and transmission. Alternately, a variety of schemes have been worked up to use Model A pedals with later transmissions, including swaps intended for the Borg-Warner T-5 five-speed, the Ford SROD four-speed, and the 1932-'39 Ford V-8 three-speed.

Transmission choice complicates the rest of the driveline, as Ford cars built through 1948 had their driveshaft enclosed in a suspension member called the torque tube. The Model A axle, though theoretically not as strong as the V-8 units of 1933-'48, will mate with the later Ford transmission without modification to either. Adapters to fit the SROD and certain models of T-5 to the torque tube have been offered, and some enthusiasts choose to switch to an open driveline. That latter option is complicated, however, because the radius rods alone were not designed to deal with the braking and acceleration forces of the rear axle.



The Model A came with a standard gearing of 3.78:1 while V-8-era Ford axles were typically 4.11:1, so swaps to later rear axles are possible but rarely performed unless seeking added strength during a V-8 swap.

BODY AND CHASSIS

The Model A frame changed very little in over four years of production. Early on (over the first half of 1928), the braking system changed to separate the service brakes from the parking/emergency brake, which left evidence not only in frame changes but in modifications to the splash aprons and the wheels. When a taller radiator on the 1930 models appeared, that required some changes as well, but in 96 years, necessity has resulted in the invention of ways to make things work together. In other words, don't despair if you find evidence your 1929 was rebuilt sometime with a 1931 frame—as long as it was done right, it should be fine.

If a frame is out of whack, the simple, ladder design is easily straightened and repaired. Aftermarket frames, frame rails, and crossmembers exist, but they are aimed almost exclusively at the street rod part of the hobby—one exception being reproductions of the oft-mangled front frame horns. Stock or lightly period-modified cars usually stick with Ford pieces. Frame-up restorations aren't as common for Model A's as they once were, but should you find yourself with a car apart for some reason and are contemplating the aforementioned conversion to a V-8 transmission, drop-in crossmembers replicating modified 1932 Ford parts exist to accommodate both transmission and pedal mounts.

WHAT TO PAY

Year	Low	Average	High
1928	$9,500	$13,500	$22,500
1929	$9,975	$13,650	$21,000
1930	$9,500	$13,000	$20,500
De Luxe	$9,975	$13,650	$21,525
1931	$9,000	$12,500	$20,000
De Luxe	$9,450	$13,125	$21,000

Modifications to the Model A braking system are hotly debated. The original four-wheel mechanical-drum system was a vast improvement over the Model T's transmission brake acting only on the rear wheels, but even Ford saw fit to improve the system a few times before converting to hydraulic brakes for the 1939 model year—perhaps most notably in a switch from stamped-steel to cast-iron drums in the course of Model A production. From a performance standpoint, hydraulic drum brakes of the 1939-'48 Ford Lockheed design (or the 1936-'49 Chevrolet Houk design, for that matter) offer no improvement over properly adjusted mechanical drums of equivalent size and acting on an equivalent contact patch.

Mechanical brakes are, however, far fiddlier to adjust than hydraulic systems and the modern hobbyist often doesn't take much joy in that task. Luckily, neither did the 1940s DIYer, so the engineering of putting '40-'48 Ford brakes on a 1928-'31 Ford was worked out long ago. Better yet, because those brakes are widespread in the traditional hot-rodding scene and the V-8 restoration scene, all the parts from backing plates and drums to wheel cylinders and shoes are available brand new.

On the flip side, if you're evaluating a car that someone put "juice" brakes on years ago and it has been sitting, watch

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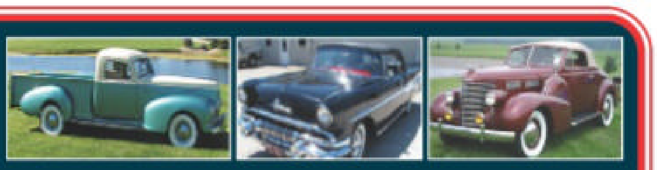

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out. Mechanical brakes don’t go bad from lack of use, but hydraulics do!

If you’re looking for extra braking ability, aftermarket kits for fitting reproduction 1940s Lincoln self-energizing hydraulic brakes are available, as are modern linings and “floaters” for improving the friction and shoe contact in the stock mechanical system.

The braking system on a Model A has consequences where wheels and tires are concerned. The very early 1928 cars had brake drums and wheels unique to themselves. Thereafter, and through 1935, Ford mechanical brake drums had supports for the wire wheels incorporated into the face. Ford hydraulic brake drums from 1940-’48 had the same 5 on 5.5-inch bolt pattern, but lacked wheel supports. Add-on supports are advisable when running 1928-’35 wires on later hydraulic drums. Likewise, later Ford steel wheels don’t seat properly on the early drums.

Because of the commonality in bolt patterns, images in the ’30s and ’40s frequently show otherwise-stock A’s running around on 18-, 17-, and especially 16-inch wire-spoke wheels from later Fords. Even when the Model A was brand new, aftermarket wheels were a common accessory and popular for their ability to provide oversized tires with a greater cushioning effect.

SUSPENSION

Often derided as “buggy sprung,” the transverse-leaf Ford suspension was simply a different approach from most of the industry, which preferred parallel leaves by that point. Because the basic system was used by Ford from 1909 to 1948, it became very refined. Because 1909-’48 parts underpinned most of American motorsport through the late 1950s, a lot of thinkers after Ford’s engineering staff have also worked on improving it.

As a road car, the well-maintained, in-spec Model A is fine unchanged. Roads today are generally much better than those of the early 1930s, so even a stock A can run up near its potential top speeds a lot of the time. The inclusion of a wheelbase of over 3.5 inches more than the Model T, plus hydraulic shock absorbers on all four wheels, meant that the A feels a lot more stable at higher speeds than its immediate predecessor. Still, there are sympathetic improvements to be made here based on later practice.

The Houdaille lever-action shock absorbers, if in good shape, should give fine service. Often, however, previous owners of even ostensibly “stock” driver-quality cars have discarded worn-out lever shocks for tube shocks. Ford itself made that change part way through 1947, and it’s a functional system that actually dates back to the 1930s on some non-Ford cars like Nash and Chrysler products, so “airplane shocks” are period tech that improve, rather than compromise handling if otherwise properly matched to the chassis.

Going further, without entirely departing from period practice, the Model A steering gear’s somewhat crude design was improved upon by 1937. Ford didn’t produce an easily interchangeable steering box until 1948—though certain Nash and Hudson boxes from the ’30s were workable swaps as well. Today, aftermarket suppliers offer F-100 pickup-style steering that bolts right into an unmodified Model A and even contains provisions for the headlamp, horn, spark, and throttle controls. Like the synchronized three-speed from a V-8 Ford, the swap to a later steering box is said to turn a nice-driving little car into a great-driving one without sacrificing the essential experience of operating a vintage machine.

INTERIOR

The standard, five-passenger interior for all four years of production was covered in cloth rather than leatherette like the open cars. Shades varied from year to year, and carpets were replaced with rubber flooring sometime late in 1928. The oval-speedometer instrument panel of 1928-’29 was replaced for 1930-’31 by one with a round speedo. Accessory gauges—and panels to mount them like the dramatic Aristocrat panel made by Dunn Manufacturing Company in Clarinda, Iowa, which added spots for two additional instruments—have been popular additions since new and a set of refinished vintage pieces add utility to the simple Model A cockpit. Since the demise of famed supplier LeBaron Bonney, the Cartouche brand (owned by Mac’s and thus by Eckler’s) has seemingly become the go-to supplier for Model A interiors, though smaller operations like Classtique Upholstery in Lindstrom, Minnesota, haven’t gone anywhere either.

IN CONCLUSION

The Model A walked the line perfectly as a new car: inexpensive but not austere; simple but not grimly utilitarian. Those virtues make it a great car to own today. It’s capable, easily worked on, easily obtained, and above all—fun.

The Tudor sedan is perhaps the most essential of all Model A’s. Their initial popularity means they’re easy to find today and their comparatively sensible nature when compared to the glamorous roadsters, phaetons, and coupes mean that they’re not suffering from an overheated market due to competition from hot rodders.

If you’ve ever contemplated owning a pre-World War II car, it’s hard to recommend anything more highly than a Ford Model A Tudor.

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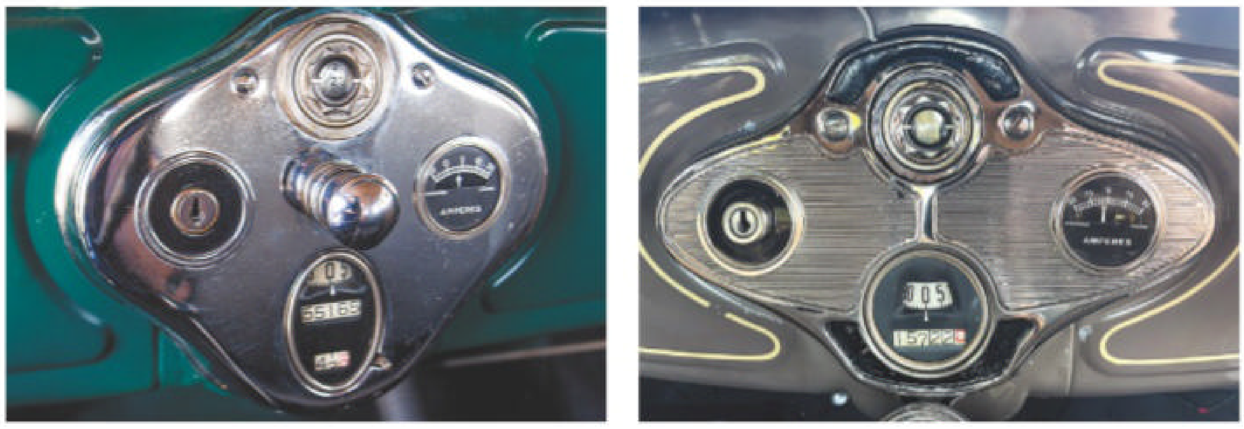
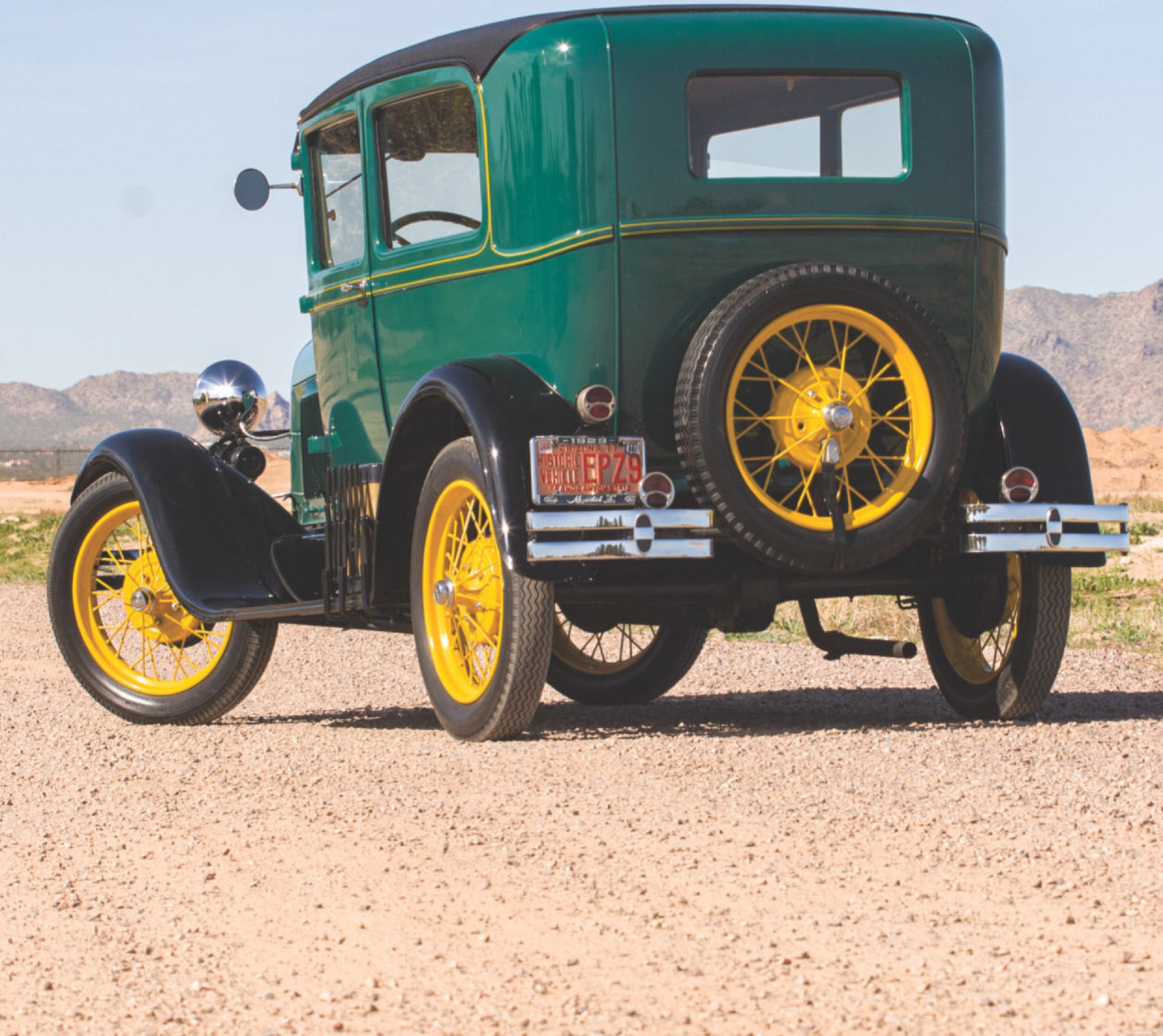


The factory instrumentation consisted of just an ammeter, a speedometer, and a sight glass for the cowl-mounted fuel tank. Additional gauges were early favorite accessories.

1929 TUDOR SEDAN



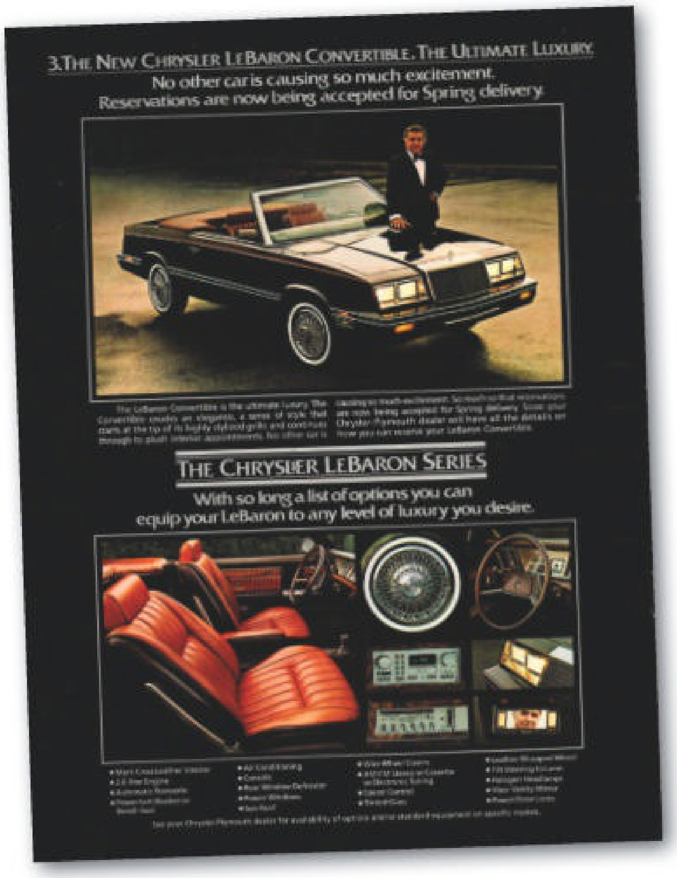
HEMMINGS
CLASSIC CAR

Return of the Ragtop

Chrysler reintroduced the convertible for 1982, including the exclusive LeBaron Medallion Mark Cross Edition

WORDS AND PHOTOGRAPHY BY JIM BLACK

When Lee Iacocca left the Ford Motor Company and joined Chrysler in 1978, he was faced with rebuilding a car company on the verge of bankruptcy. One of the reasons for the company's lack of capital, he claimed, was that the corporation's diverse number of platforms—five in production at the time—shared few common parts, which in turn had created a complex manufacturing and inventory conundrum.



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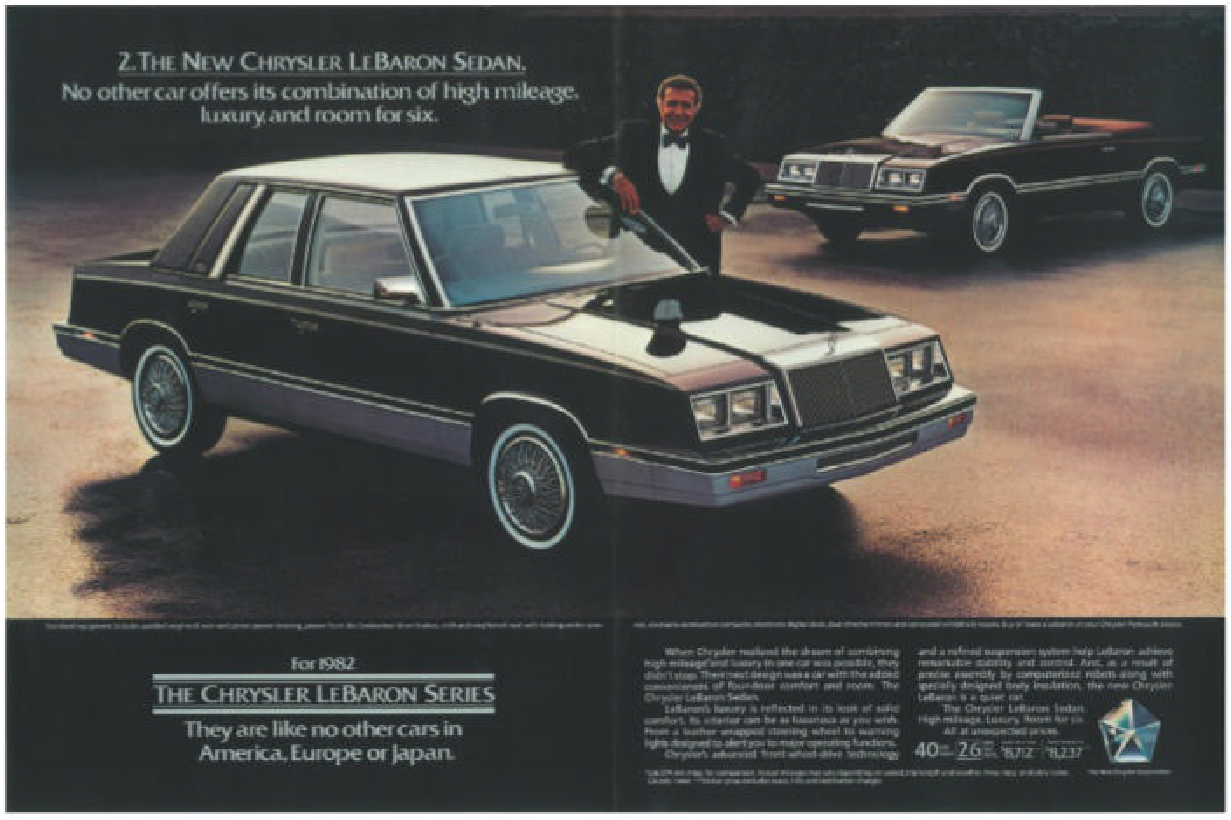

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No other car offers its combination of high mileage,
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For 1982
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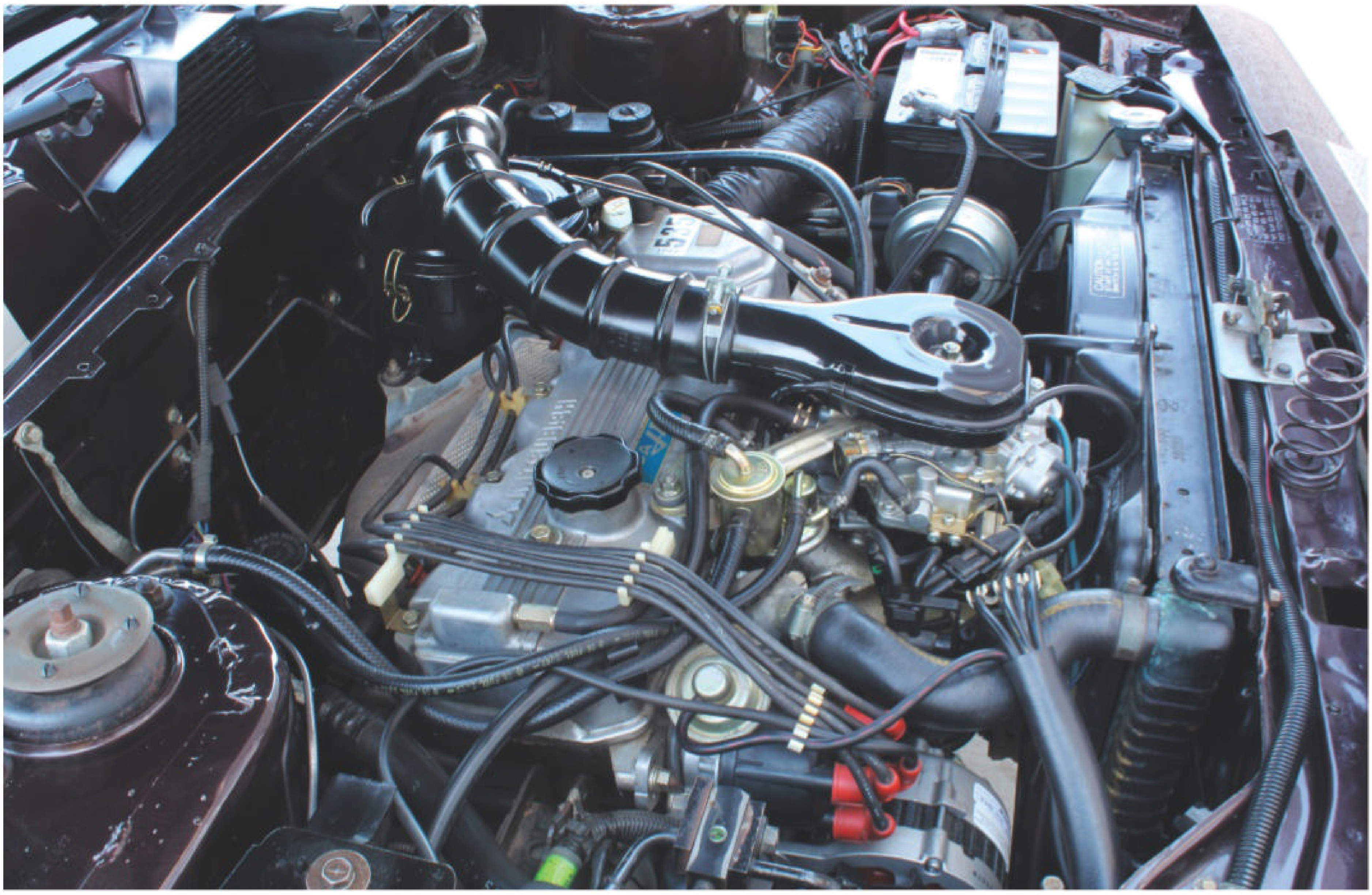
They are like no other cars in
America, Europe or Japan.

Correcting Chrysler's fortunes would require a streamlined system of production already in practice in Germany and Japan: fewer platforms with a broad array of shared components, most of which were hidden from buyer's eyes. While Iacocca stood before the U.S. Congress making his appeal for the great "Chrysler bailout" in 1979, his engineers were busy developing a new chassis: The K-car platform.

The new front-wheel-drive K-platform debuted as the compact Dodge Aries and Plymouth Reliant in the fall of 1980, replacing the recall-plagued Aspen and Volare in the divisions' lineups. Each of the new "K-cars" were offered in two-door and four-door sedan body styles, as well as a station wagon, in various trim levels. It was a clear shift for the corporation, with more aerodynamic and fuel-efficient vehicles aimed at lowering the buyers' operating costs while simultaneously reducing production costs.

No sooner had the K-car begun to roll off dealership lots across the country when the parent division began to adopt the chassis for a reimagined LeBaron, set to be introduced for 1982. Like its corporate siblings, the new LeBaron was to make use of the existing two-door coupe, four-door



The Mitsubishi 2.6-liter four-cylinder engine developed 92 hp at 4,500 rpm and 131 lb-ft of torque at 2,500 rpm.

CLASSIC CAR

sedan, and wagon—but a storied, luxurious name needed, perhaps, just a bit more, and this is where adaptability came into play as part of Iacocca's engineering directive.

The Chrysler brand had not offered a convertible since the 1970 model year. Encouraged, in part, by a rebounding economy, Iacocca felt there might be renewed interest. To test the waters, he had a LeBaron two-door coupe sent from the St Louis, Missouri, plant to California, where it was modified into a "non-functional" convertible. Once completed and displayed at several auto shows—where it was met with strong interest—Cars and Concepts, based in Brighton, Michigan, was contracted to manage the conversion of two-door coupes into convertibles for the posh LeBaron (and the new Dodge 400).

Cars and Concepts was chosen from a list of aftermarket firms based on their competitive price, coupled with a full-service package of engineering, manufacturing, and after-sale support. Just as important, the company was deemed to have a proper concept of how to build convertibles in the new decade. As one would expect, Cars and Concepts did more than just hack off the roof of a two-door coupe. Approximately 34 separate steps were undertaken to complete the complex conversion, most of which included the necessary sheetmetal surgery and intricate body reinforcement required.

Thus, when the reimagined Chrysler LeBaron was officially unveiled for 1982, the entry-level luxury car was available in two-door coupe, four-door sedan, and convertible guises. Having shed its former boxy look for aerodynamic sleekness without sacrificing elegant trimmings, the all-new LeBaron was announced as, "Lee Iacocca's dream to combine high mileage and luxury in a series of cars," in ads pitched by actor Ricardo Montalban.

With the redesign came refreshing fuel-mileage estimates of 25 in the city and as high as 40 on the highway. Such numbers were made possible in part by a Chrysler-developed 2.2-liter four-cylinder engine (equating to 135 cubic inches) rated at 84 hp and 111 lb-ft of torque offered as standard equipment, save for the LeBaron Town & Country, which received the otherwise-optional Mitsubishi-produced 2.6 liter four-cylinder. A four-speed manual transmission was standard, though an automatic was optional.

Naturally, the LeBaron convertible

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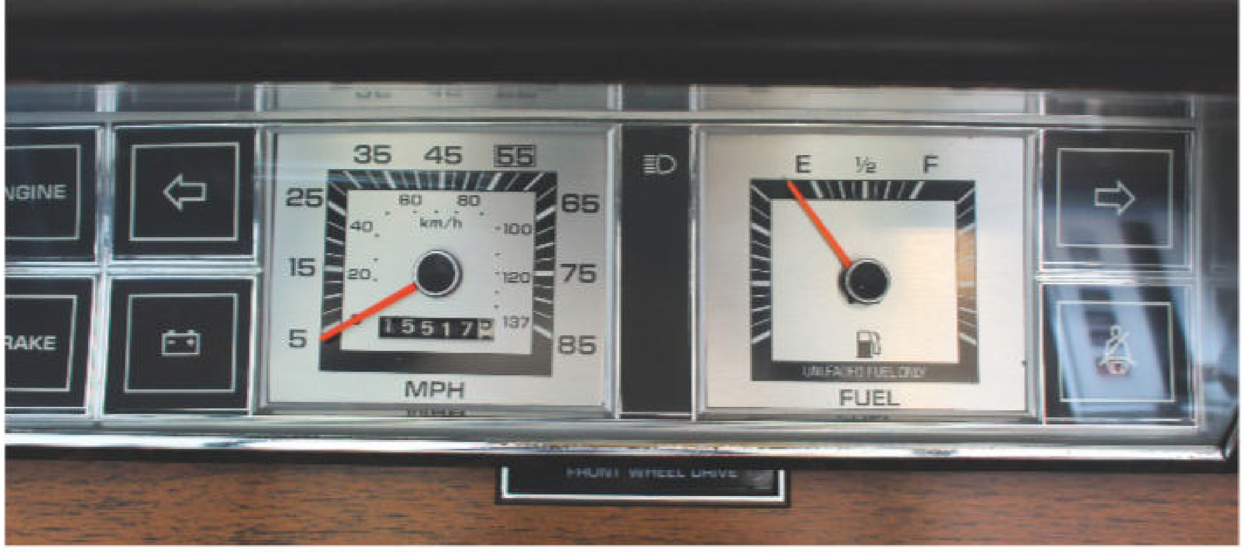
was to be the ultimate in luxury further touted in Chrysler brochures and ads: "The convertible exudes an elegance, a sense of style that starts at the tip of its highly stylized grille and continues through to plush interior appointments. No other car is causing so much excitement." That said, a luxury tradition was maintained when Chrysler offered the line in the upscale Medallion series, as depicted by this Mark Cross edition currently under the care of Ted DeHoogh of Sioux Center, Iowa.

The Mark Cross Edition was available for buyers who wanted their LeBaron fully equipped with standard LeBaron and otherwise-optional equipment. In convertible form, and beyond the exclusive Mark Cross leather interior and trim, this included power steering, power brakes, power windows, power door locks, power top, remote trunk release, cruise control, air conditioning, console with bucket seats, tilt wheel, twin remote mirrors, AM/FM/cassette radio, wire wheel covers, and more. There was also a $1,000 Reservation Certificate receipt presented in a beautiful leatherette Mark Cross portfolio. Additional premiums included an umbrella with holder color-keyed to the car's interior and a "Made in Italy" Mark Cross key chain and key.

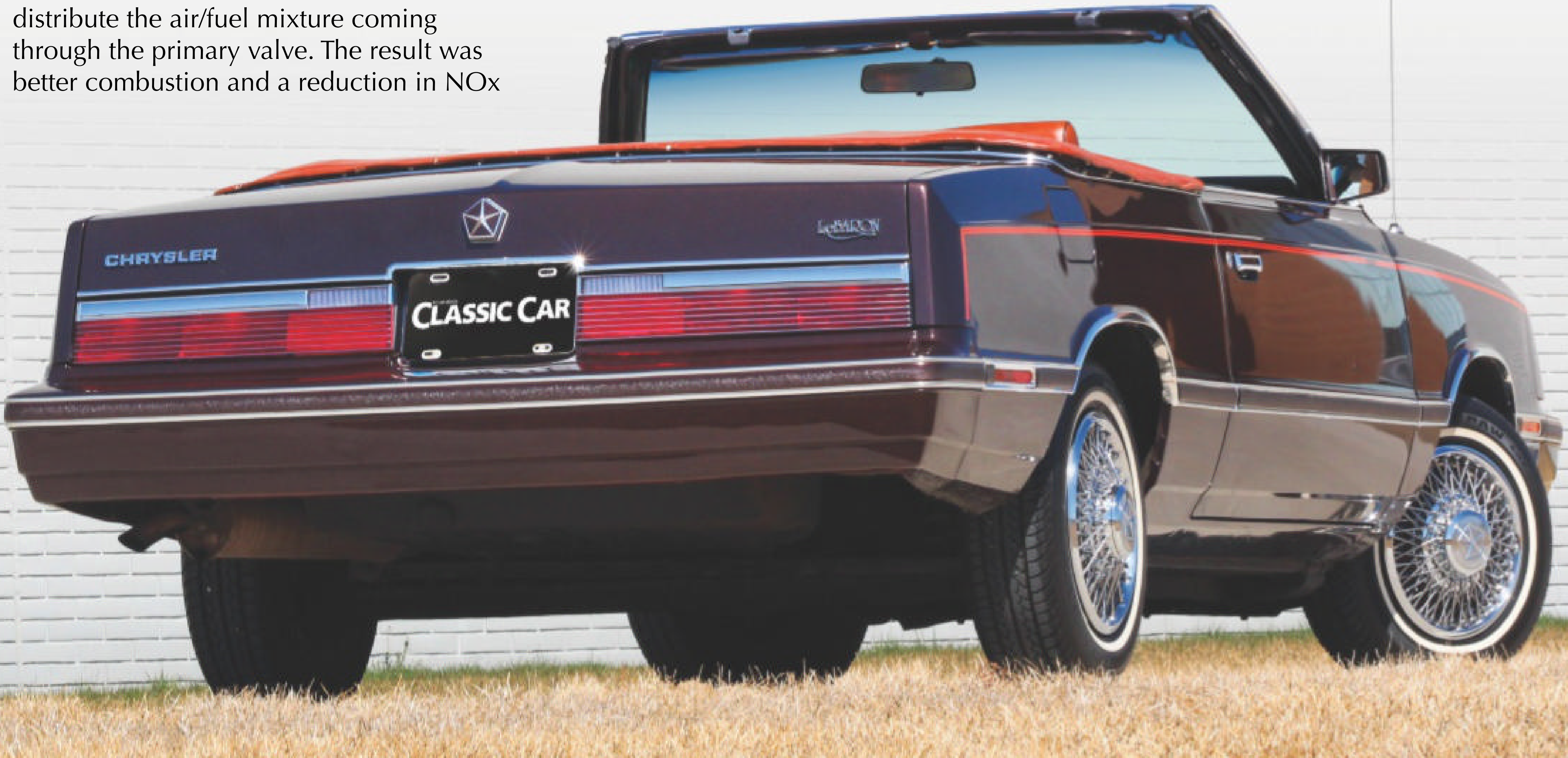
Forgoing the standard equipment list further, the Mark Cross editions were delivered with the Mitsubishi 2.6-liter "MCA Jet" four-cylinder backed by a front-wheel-drive three-speed Torqueflite automatic. The spunky 156-cu.in., two-barrel-topped four-cylinder featured a second intake valve that was much smaller than the primary unit. Prior to combustion, a blast of high-pressure air (the "Jet" part of MCA Jet) was introduced into the combustion chamber to better distribute the air/fuel mixture coming through the primary valve. The result was better combustion and a reduction in NOx emissions. The 2.6 carried a power rating of 92 hp at 4,500 rpm and 131 lb-ft of torque at 2,500 rpm.

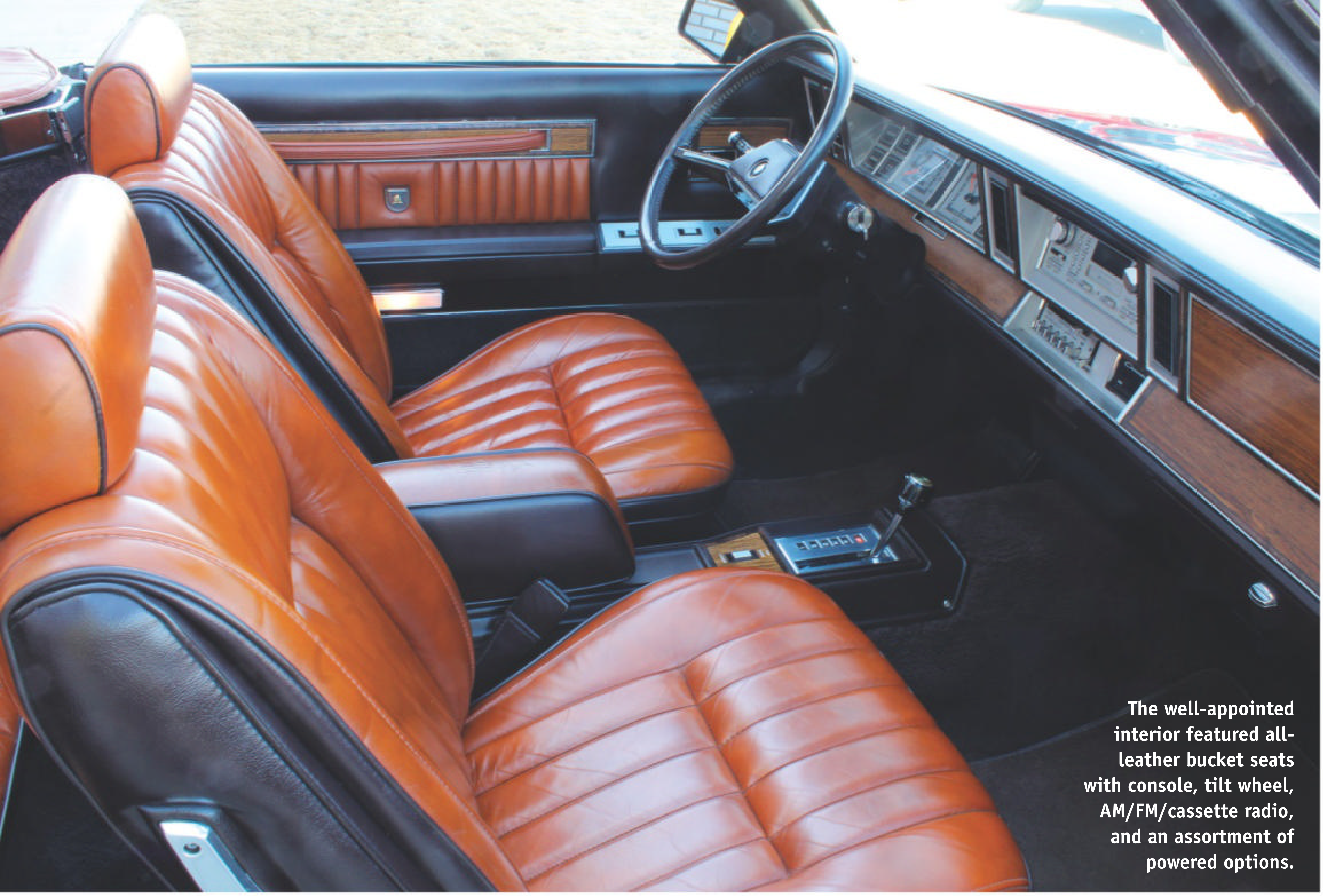

At the time of the photoshoot, this Mark Cross convertible showed just 15,517 miles on the odometer.

Contrary to what one may think, this four-cylinder powerplant was no stranger to U.S.-market Chrysler products. It had already enjoyed service within the 1978-'80 Plymouth Fire Arrow, as well as the compact 1979-'80 Dodge Ram D-50 pickup.

The MSRP for our featured and truly limited-edition 1982 Medallion Mark Cross was $13,900 plus a $355 destination charge. Current owner Ted explains, "John Franklen, a local Sioux Center, Iowa, businessman special ordered this Chrysler LeBaron Medallion Mark Cross convertible through Vos Motor Sales in November of 1981." This example had been ordered in Mahogany Starmist (code VH9) with a white top, and Ted has Chrysler correspondence obtained by the original owner that verified, by VIN, that this car was the 34th convertible modified by Cars and Concepts. "It was the first Mark Cross convertible delivered in the four-state area and it was displayed in the dealer showroom for a week before being delivered to its owner."

Spending the equivalent of nearly $44,000 in today's currency on what was then essentially Iacocca's compact luxury car gamble, and not being able to take delivery for a week while on display, might have raised an eyebrow for most, but it mustn't have fazed Franklen in the least.





The well-appointed interior featured all-leather bucket seats with console, tilt wheel, AM/FM/cassette radio, and an assortment of powered options.

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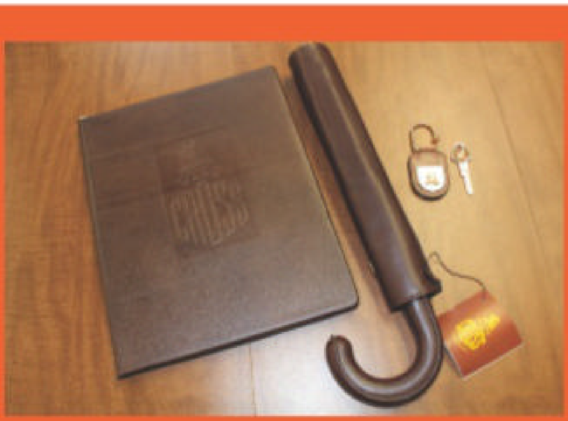
“Once he was able to fully take ownership, Franklen drove the convertible for about 11 years, pulling the city float in parades and taking dignitaries around the town,” Ted recalls. “The dealer purchased the car back in 1993 and then put it in storage until I purchased it in July 2014. The odometer reading at the time was just 14,200 miles. I never owned a convertible before and when the opportunity came to buy it, I didn’t hesitate.”

Time has since proven that reintroducing a convertible to the Chrysler line was a gamble that paid off. Back in 1970, just 1,077 Chrysler 300 convertibles were built. At the conclusion of the ’82 season, Chrysler, with Car & Concepts, had built 3,045 base LeBaron convertibles, in addition to 9,780 upscale Medallion versions for a then-whopping total of 12,825 units. That’s excluding another 5,541 same-year Dodge 400 convertibles. Though seemingly heady numbers out of the gate, a LeBaron Medallion drop-top is a comparative rarity today, something Ted keeps in mind.

“I haven’t driven the car much in the eight years that I’ve owned it,” he says, adding, “The current odometer reading is 15,500 miles. Since purchase I’ve just cleaned and detailed it, kept it maintained, and have carefully enjoyed this unusual piece of automotive history—it is a ‘survivor.’ I’m selective about when I take it out; it’s usually to attend a few local shows annually.”

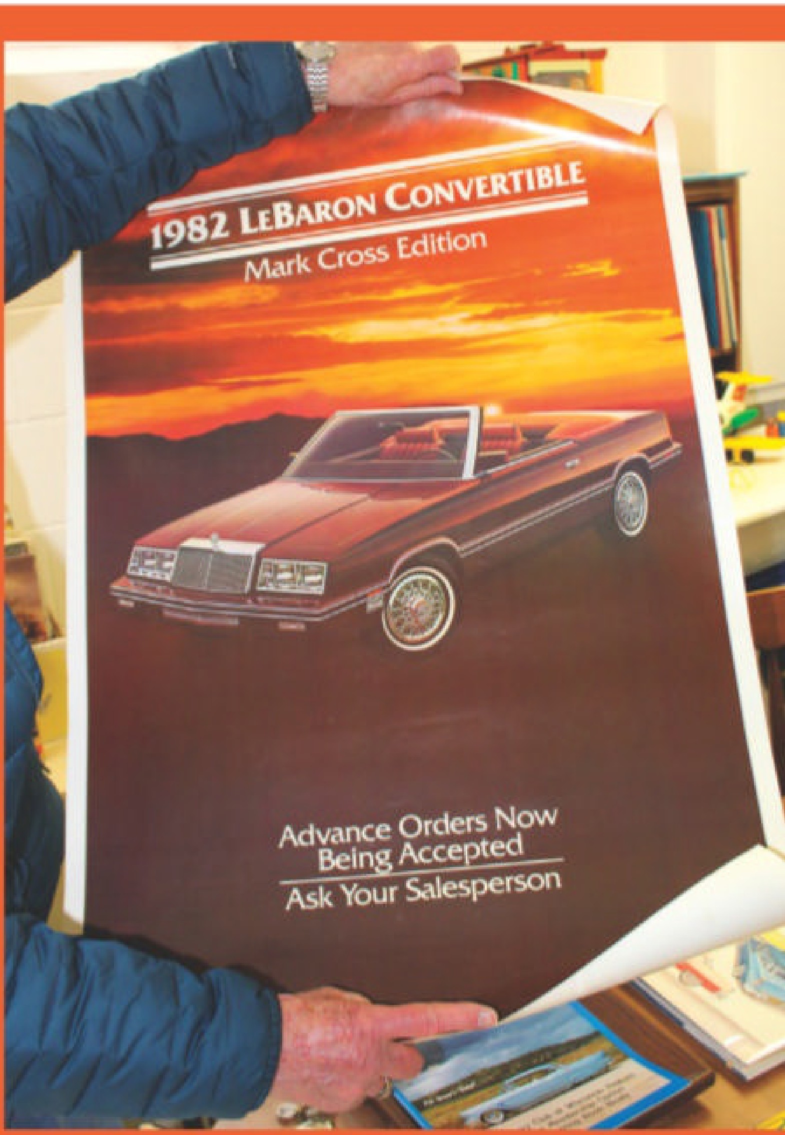
“I have a gold mine of documentation regarding the development and production of these convertibles,” Ted says. “The dealer also provided me with all the original paperwork, additional premiums (see photos, below), and correspondence sent to the original owner, as well as brochures and dealer posters—it’s all there. It has been very interesting owning this unique car with all its documented history and sharing it with others who take the time to stop and ask about it at events.”



Factory premiums provided by Chrysler included the leatherette portfolio, umbrella with case, and key and key chain.

1982 CHRYSLER LeBARON
1982 CHRYSLER LeBARON CONVERTIBLE

The large assortment of documentation includes operating instructions, convertible top manual, window sticker, letters from Lee Iacocca, Chrysler VIN verification letter, and more.



Included in Ted’s documentation is this original sales poster advertising for advance orders.

Reservation Certificate
Chrysler LeBaron Convertible
Mark Cross Edition
RECEIPT
ONE THOUSAND AND
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REDEMPTION

Leatherette portfolio included the Reservation Certificate receipt in the amount of $1,000, which was required for pre-ordering as part of the LeBaron Convertible Advance Order Program.

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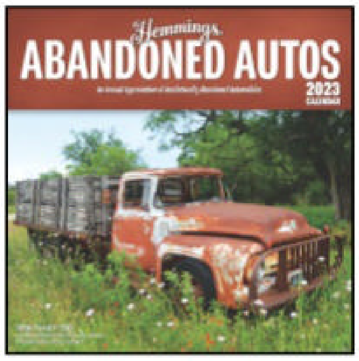
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Hemmings
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Cars of the ’60s
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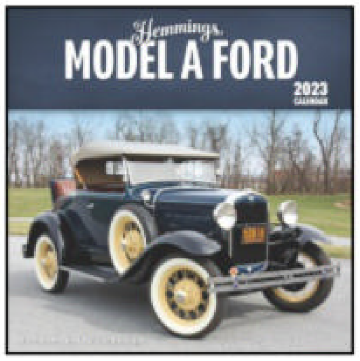
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Model A Ford
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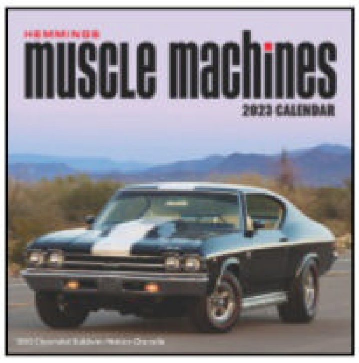
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This unrestored 1967 Oldsmobile Delta 88 Custom was a karmic happenstance with life-changing implications

WORDS AND PHOTOGRAPHY BY JEFF KOCH

Sometimes, the cars just find you. Ray and Adeline Borens took possession of this gently used '67 Oldsmobile Delta 88 Custom in late 1967, when the couple decided it was time to get a new car. "They lived in Marshfield, Wisconsin, and probably had an Oldsmobile dealer closer to them than Cooper in Stevens Point, but they found this car," son-in-law Jim Schultz recalls. And when they found it, they held onto it—and didn't let go until 1995, long since Ray had passed and Adeline was no longer able to drive. Twenty-seven years in the upper Midwest, with snow and salt abundant during the long winter months, is a long time for any car, much less one from the '60s when people were expected to trade in every three years and rust protection wasn't what it could have been.

The 1967 Delta 88 Custom was admittedly a thin proposition: choice of two- or four-door hardtop body styles, standard "Morocceen-tufted Strato-bucket" seats and console on the coupes or Strato-bench on the sedans, plus full-length bodyside moldings, and a unique rear bumper that doubled the number of lenses and bulbs contained therein—the top-side lenses were mirrored lower in the bumper for a total of four light segments rather than the standard two. Honestly, it doesn't seem like you got much for an extra $212 on top of a standard Delta 88 two-door hardtop. The Detroit copywriters surely were a little too on the nose when they asked in the '67 dealer brochure, "Two all-new Custom hardtops… Do they gild the lily?"

ARIZONA
THE GRAND CANYON STATE WELCOMES YOU

A pair of grab shots from Jim and Trudi taking possession in 1995; they drive it from Wisconsin to their home in Chino Valley, Arizona, without a hitch. A couple of photogenic stops at the Grand Canyon (left) and the state line on I-40 on the AZ/NM border (right) underscore nearly 30 years of desert living for the Delta Custom.

For greater context, Jim (a founder of the Arizona chapter of the Oldsmobile Club of America, and past president of the National Antique Oldsmobile Club) reveals, "It's been said that if the Starfire name plate had carried over to the '67 model year, that the Delta Customs would have been Starfires." Indeed, with '66 Starfire production at just over 13,000, the '67 Delta Custom coupe (with 12,192 sold for its debut season) would have been in line with recent Starfire sales but could not have been seen as a success on its own. Granted there was a sedan version also, which did marginally better with 14,306 sold in '67.

It's only right and natural that your local Oldsmobile dealer would want to load up a sexy hardtop fastback and make it a showpiece in his neighborhood. So it happened with the owner of Cooper Pontiac-Oldsmobile in Stevens Point, Wisconsin—he ordered a new '67 Delta Custom for his wife, who drove it around town all year until the '68s came in. In addition to this one being painted Spanish Red, one of the more vibrant hues on the '67 Oldsmobile color chart and offset by a black vinyl top, it was loaded—handsomely equipped with Turbo-Hydramatic transmission, power steering and brakes, tilt and telescopic steering wheel, Safety Sentinel speedometer, Comfortron air conditioning, six-way power seat, Wonderbar radio, rear mounted power antenna, vacuum power door locks, wire wheel

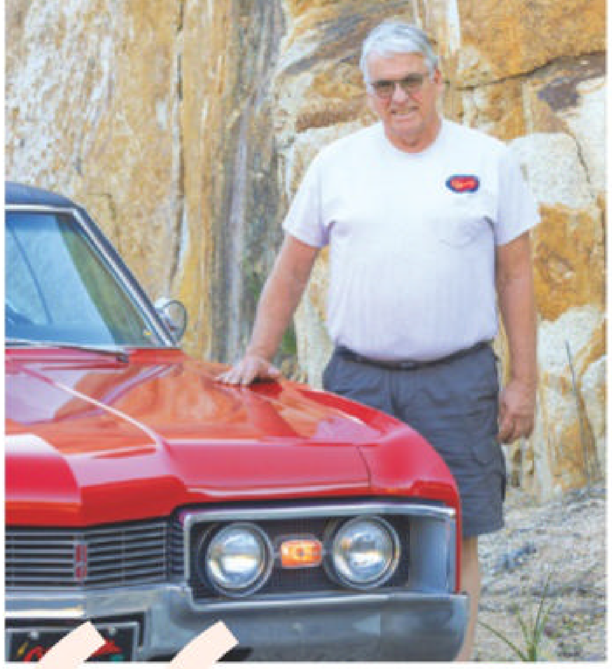
Oldsmobile

covers, and trunk opener.

"Pretty high-end for an 88," Jim tells us, and with an option list like that, he's not wrong. Curiously, it used the standard engine, the two-barrel Olds 425 Super Rocket rated at 300 gross horsepower, rather than a 365-horse four-barrel Super Rocket or the higher-compression 375-horse Starfire Rocket 425. This underscored its use as a local show pony rather than a tire-smoker. As such, its shelf life was known from the get-go: when the '68s rolled in, this Delta 88 Custom was quietly shuffled onto the used car lot.

That is where Ray and Adeline found it. Ray had a Cougar in the garage, so the Olds was Adeline's car. It transported Adeline to her volunteer work at her local church, and even delivered Meals on Wheels for a time. "Can you imagine being delivered a meal by a lady with a huge red Olds like that!" Jim marvels. Adeline also worked for the local paper. "She wrote obituaries, and even wrote her own," Jim says. She could easily have replaced the Delta Custom at any time, but never did. Adeline named it Bessie. Who could discard a car they named? Besides, since Jim had taken a shine to it, Adelaide decided to keep it around.

Sometime in the '70s, Jim, who was based in upstate New York, was introduced to Ray and Adeline's daughter, Trudi, through a mutual friend; by 1980, Jim and Trudi were married. Long-time readers of this publication may recall



Jim (now of Chino Valley, Arizona) as owner of Rocket Ranch, a dozens-deep collection of Oldsmobiles stretching from pre-war through 1975 (*HCC*, Nov 2013). In that piece, he told us: "My whole existence seems to circulate around Oldsmobiles; it's the kind of karma I have. And all of what I have here represents something to me." Yet Jim swears he had no idea that his mother-in-law-to-be owned an Olds — it never came up in conversation beforehand. After they were a married couple, Jim says, "Trudi and I would go back to visit once a year, and I'd detail it and preserve it and keep it in shape. We used to kid — Trudi would accuse me of marrying her to get at her mom's Oldsmobile, and I'd tell her that she was only half right."

Jim got to drive it when he and Trudi were in town. "When I would get in it and drive for the first time of the visit, I would get out on the main road and when it got to 25 mph, the Safety Sentinel would go off; the buzzer sounded just like my radar detector, so I thought I was in trouble speeding. But the speed limit on the main street was 25 mph so [Adelaide] set the sentinel accordingly. And those times in that car, on our way to Perkins Pancake House for dinner, brought irreplaceable memories and side-splitting laughter."

> *We used to kid—Trudi would accuse me of marrying her to get at her mom's Oldsmobile, and I'd tell her that she was only half right.*

He even got the OK to show off Adelaide's Delta now and again as well. "In 1987, I drove it to Lansing, Michigan, to a meet celebrating the 90th Anniversary of Oldsmobile. Then, sometime in the early '90s, she got into a little accident, and the body shop replaced the rear bumper with a one from a regular '67 88 without the lower taillights." When Adelaide stopped driving in 1995, at the age of 84, there was no question where the Olds was going to end up. Jim and Trudi flew out to Wisconsin, took possession of the then-45,000-mile Delta Custom, and drove the 1,800-odd miles home to Chino Valley. A correct rear bumper was promptly procured and installed to make that red Delta properly Custom once again. It remains in rotation within Jim's three-dozen-Olds fleet and retains a chronological spot in the 6,000-square-foot building that serves as the hub of the Rocket Ranch.

OLDSMOBILE
ARIZONA
MMV 367
GRAND CANYON STATE

Super Rocket
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As many of us know, spouses aren't always the most supportive of our automotive hobby. It makes peace in the household tenuous and complicated, even with just one or two collector cars. Jim has literally dozens. Trudi, who had encouraged the couple's move to Arizona in the early '80s, was happy to let Jim do as he pleased with his collection—hence the size of the building that houses them and the quantity of cars therein. Jim understands how lucky he's been (luck that he feels is underscored by the discovery and continued presence of a pair of four-leaf-clovers wrapped in wax paper in the glove box). This Delta Custom, this showy option-filled dealer's-wife special, serves as a poignant reminder of both his late wife and her mother. "You have photo albums, but the pictures in your mind of times spent with these cars are much more vivid, plentiful, and frequently emotional."

The plan, unsurprisingly, is to keep the Delta Custom within the family. "This family heirloom will be passed on to grandson Jacob, as he has the interest in being 'Ol Bessie's next caretaker," Jim reports.

Sometimes, the cars just find you. And sometimes, they mean a whole lot more than just getting from A to B.

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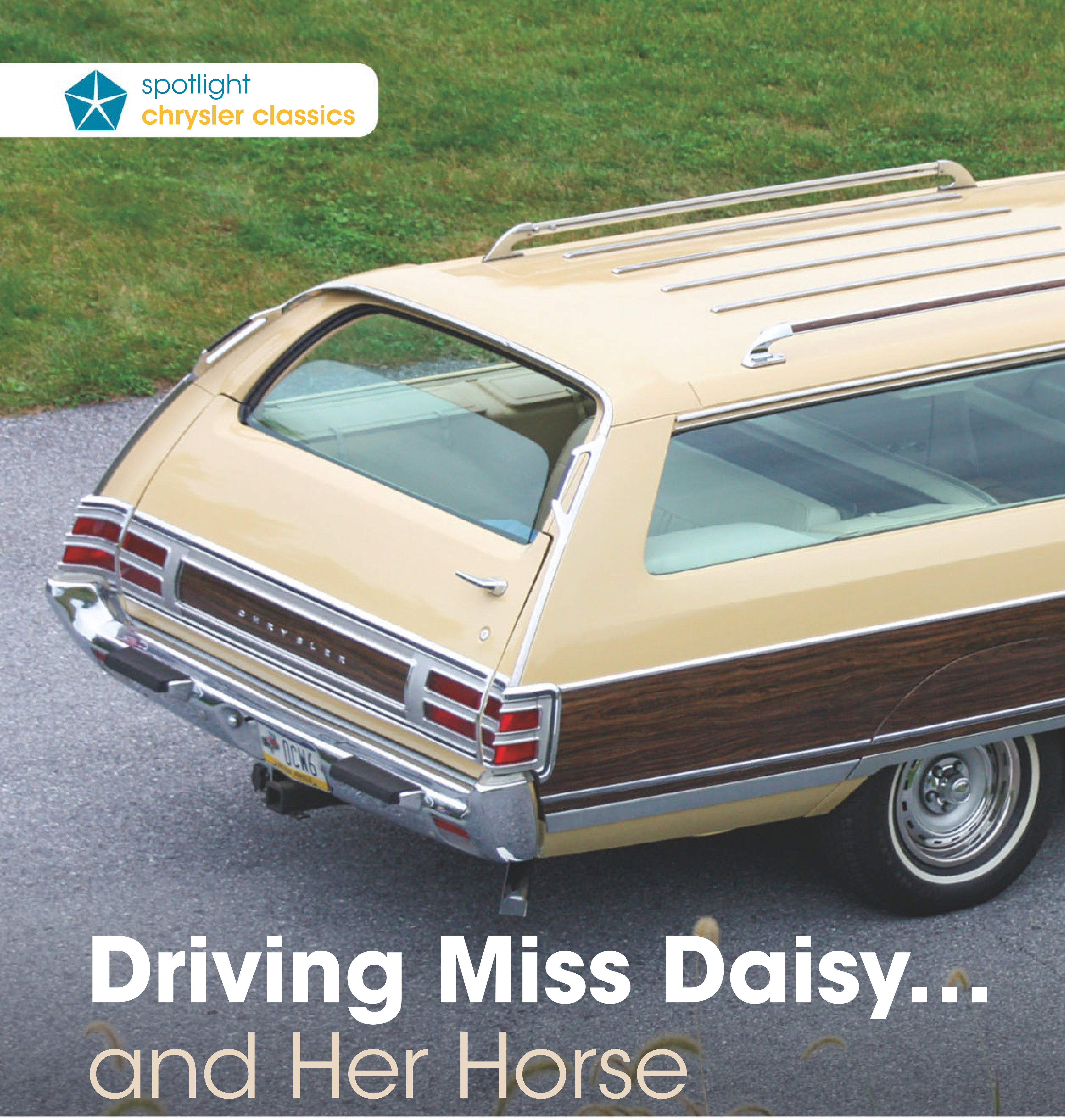


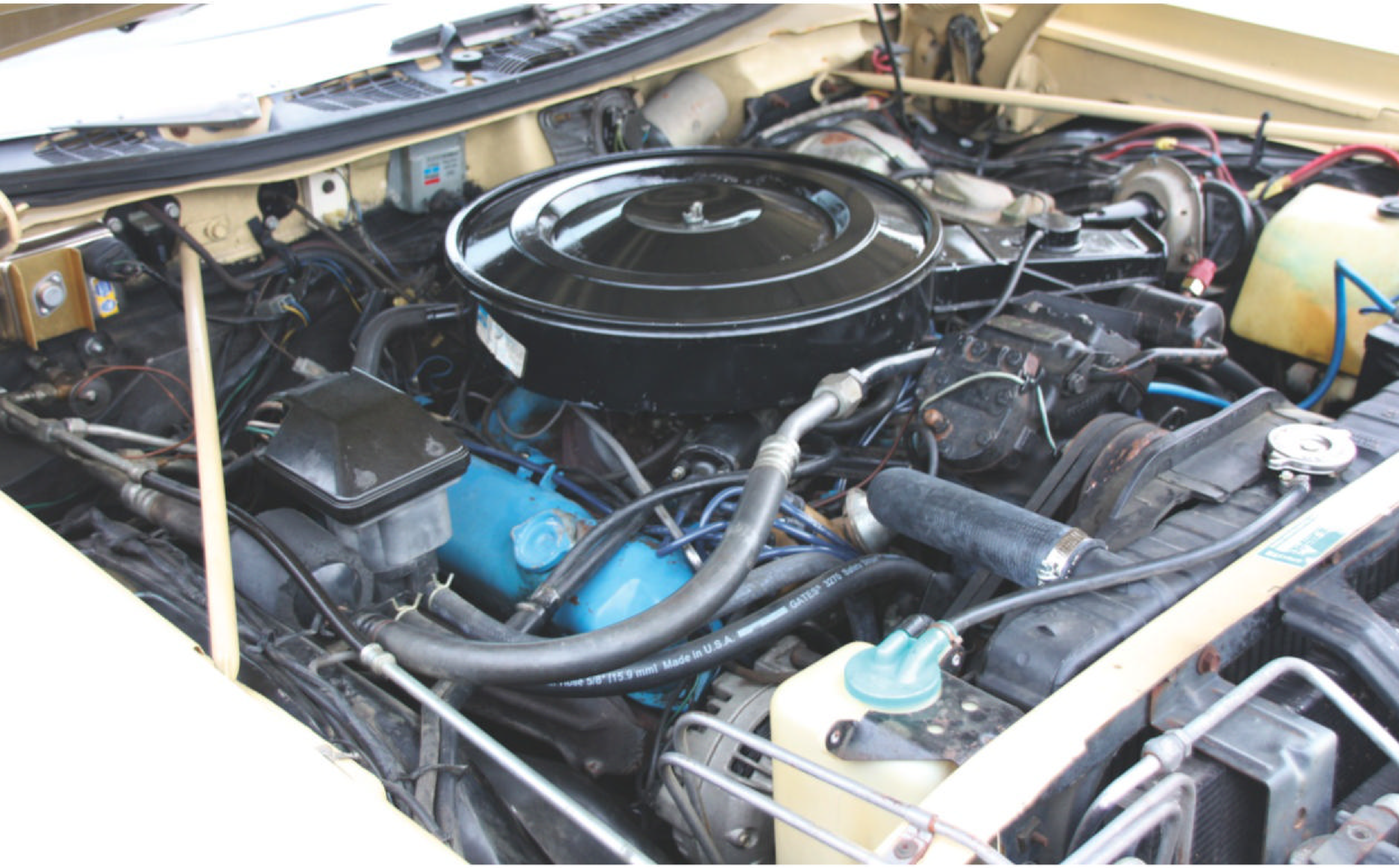
Driving Miss Daisy... and Her Horse

Learning the past of a fabulous 1973 Chrysler Town & Country station wagon

BY JIM DONNELLY • PHOTOGRAPHY BY MATTHEW LITWIN AND DAVID CONWILL

In the late 1980s, Chrysler transformed its Town & Country, and most other station wagons it produced, by reimagining it as one of Chrysler's first-generation minivans, built on the front-drive S platform and sharing its powertrain with Lee Iacocca's ubiquitous K-cars. That's notable because for most of the time leading up to then, the Town & Country was a massive, luxury-packed conventional station wagon with a longitudinal layout and an overall length that stretched right out of sight. The Chrysler minivans rocked the automotive world as few new cars before them, defining a new way to carry people and their possessions.

Thing was, the redefinition of the wagon erased some of the attributes that made Americans love big station wagons in the first place: Gobs of big-block power, enough to ferry a full family across the continent, with their belongings in back and whatever was left over in a trailer bobbing along behind. It's a portrait in



Its output choked down considerably due to mandated emissions controls, the Thermoquad-fed 440 still generated enough low-end torque to get the Chrysler moving smartly with a live horse and trailer, an easy ton, dragging along behind.

time that defines the postwar American dream as thoroughly as a tract house in a newly plowed suburb. A big station wagon is an iconic automobile. Given the way most of them were used hard by their owners and the owners' hordes of kids, finding a survivor today is a definite occasion.

The exact mileage of this enormous 1973 Chrysler Town & Country nine-passenger station wagon (which means a rear-facing third seat) is unclear, though the owner thinks it's on the light side of 100,000. Its condition is both original and phenomenal: Virtually everything, right down to the 3M woodgrain on the sides, is just as it was when the monstrous wagon rolled out of the Jefferson Avenue plant in Detroit in September 1972. All the owner says he's had to do is gently touch up a little bit of woodgrain and one rock-chipped body piece, and then figure out its complex climate control's vagaries.

According to widely accepted records, Chrysler built 14,687 copies of the nine-passenger Town & Country wagons for 1973, the highest total for fuselage-body wagons in that premium model range. Look inside, and you'll find an unusual non-patterned cloth interior in prime condition, and a cargo area that's devoid of scuffs and gouges from skidding objects and careless feet. It's fully loaded with options, lacking only power windows, surprising for a car that was sold new in Arizona.

Again, fewer than 15,000 were built. Where are you going to find a survivor with this level of originality, options, and non-abused quality? In your dreams. Or, if you're particularly fortunate, in the car corral at the AACA Eastern Fall Meet in Hershey, Pennsylvania. Hank Hallowell, who lives in Hershey and owns this nearly perfect Chrysler, bought it there just minutes after also buying a late "Letter Car" from Chrysler at the same sale.

"It's my favorite Town & Country, to be truthful," Hank explains. "I prefer the front end of the 1973; it's the only year without the chrome loop front bumper, and it has the Chrysler New Yorker front end because the industry was heading toward a more formal, classic look. The New Yorker front looks majestic on the Town and Country. Plus, '72 and '73 were the only years for the fuselage-body wagon with fender skirts, which enhance the lines of the car dramatically."

Hank calls the Town & Country, and its immediate competitors, "the ultimate people movers." The world of American luxury station wagons in those years was small but exclusive; Chrysler was only accompanied by the full-size Buick Estate, Olds Custom Cruiser, and Mercury Colony Park wagons. They were all about hauling people and possessions long distances in utter comfort. In this wagon's case, its first home was in the fleet of a well-to-do rancher from Wickenburg, Arizona, just outside Phoenix. A lot of its mileage was acquired by doing multiple cross-country trips, while always being chauffeur-driven and -maintained.

As Hank was told, the Chrysler was driven "sparingly" except for long journeys from Arizona to upstate New York to pick up an elderly woman, presumably a relative of the owner, and her prized horse for the trip back

CHRYSLER
CLASSIC CAR

to Wickenburg. Optioned new from the factory with a full towing package, the Town & Country is powered by the smog-restricted 440-cu.in. Chrysler big-block V-8, mated to a heavy-duty TorqueFlite 727 three-speed automatic transmission with cooler, along with heavy-duty cooling and electrical systems. Rated for 215 horsepower in 1973, the 440, topped by a Carter Thermoquad four-barrel carburetor, nonetheless still ladled out 345 lb-ft of blacktop-rippling torque, all the better to handle its 4,838-pound curb weight.

As Hank tells the story, the Arizona chauffeur deadheaded the Town & Country to New York before its senior passenger and her belongings were loaded, along with the woman's horse in a two-axle trailer out back. That's probably a ton of extra poundage. The Chrysler carried them, cool and comfy, back to Arizona, a cycle that was repeated multiple times during the wagon's Arizona lifespan. The round trip was made twice a year. The elderly woman, incidentally, was a descendant of the inventor of the Dewey decimal classification system universally used by libraries, Hank remembers.

You'd practically need a library to track the full list of options and unique features on this wagon. Perhaps the most unusual was dual air conditioning, using a complete second unit that hung down from the headliner aft of the rear seat. "I've decoded the option plate and it has every option you could get in 1973, except for power windows, which is kind of interesting," Hank says. "The transmission cooler looks like it could be in a motorhome. This is really more comparable to a Dodge ¾-ton pickup than it is to a station wagon. When Chrysler does something heavy duty, they really mean it. The springing, driveline, and cooling are

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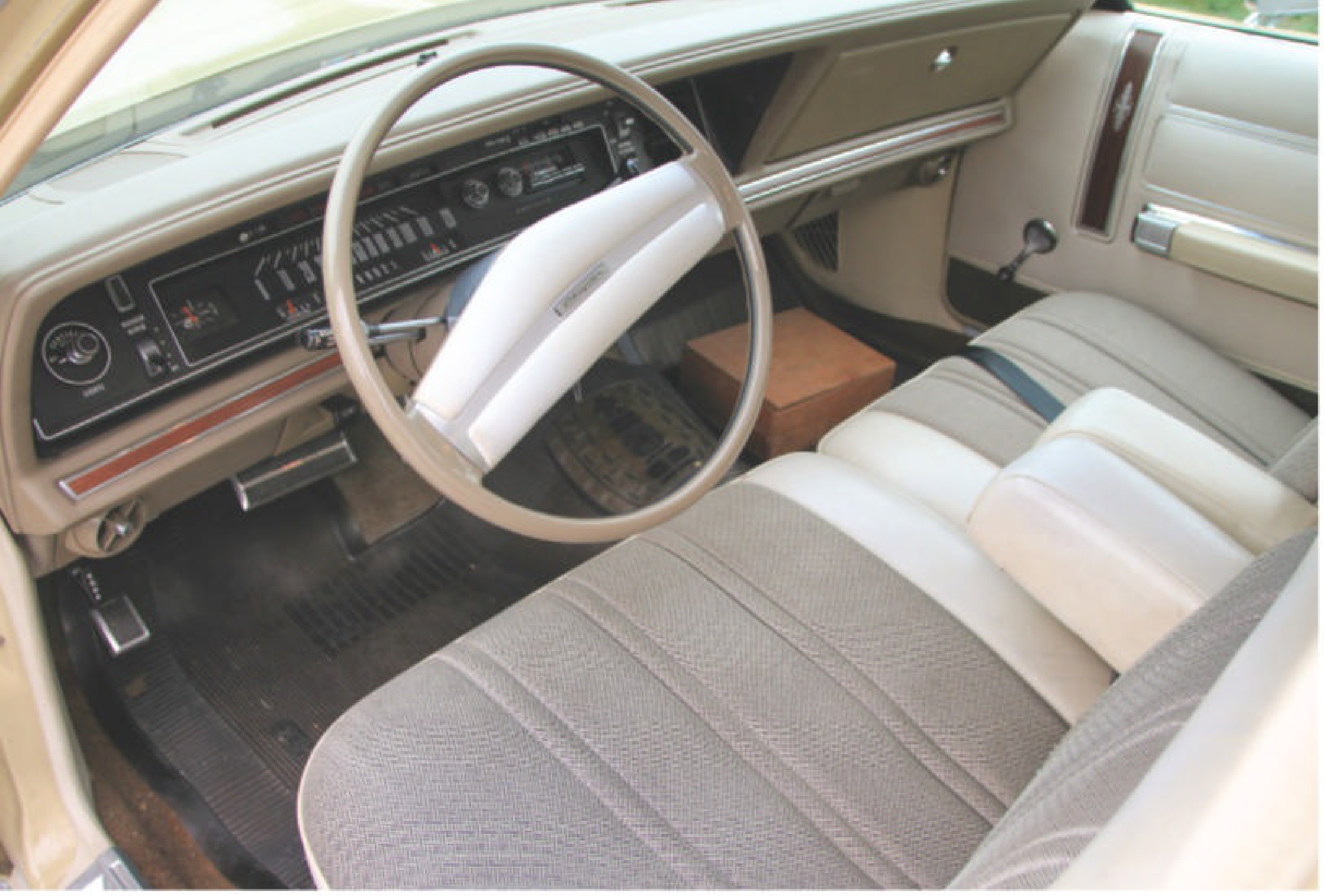

CHRYSLER
CLASSIC C

Acres of stretch-out space define the interior of the Town & Country, its interior clad in a very unusual monochromatic upholstery. Unlike most vintage station wagons, the passenger and cargo areas of this Chrysler are just pristine.

all engineered for heavy use."

The color is a non-metallic shade called Honey Gold, offset by what Hank says is the only solid-color parchment cloth seat treatment he's ever seen on a premium Chrysler product of the era, with the fabrics covering a split power front 50/50 bench seat. The chrome, in his word, is "immaculate." The 3M Di-Noc decaling on the sides needed only a minor touch-up with a paint pen. There is no hint of rust or bubbling anywhere. The header panel above the grille was repainted across the top to remedy a few stone chips. That's it. The original Arizona license plate is still mounted up front.

The Town & Country remained in Arizona until a 3M corporate attorney, in rich irony, learned of its existence while attending a business conference in the Phoenix area. He found the car listed in a classified for the estate of the late Wickenburg rancher. The attorney was a Chrysler enthusiast like Hank and used the wagon for trailering part of his own car collection—again, torque talks. About four years ago, Hank spotted it in the Hershey car corral during an already successful shopping trip.

To use the showroom vernacular, this Chrysler is loaded to the gills. There's power steering, power disc/drum brakes, tilt/telescope steering column, and a three-way tailgate: It swings open with the power rear window up or down, and drops down conventionally like a normal

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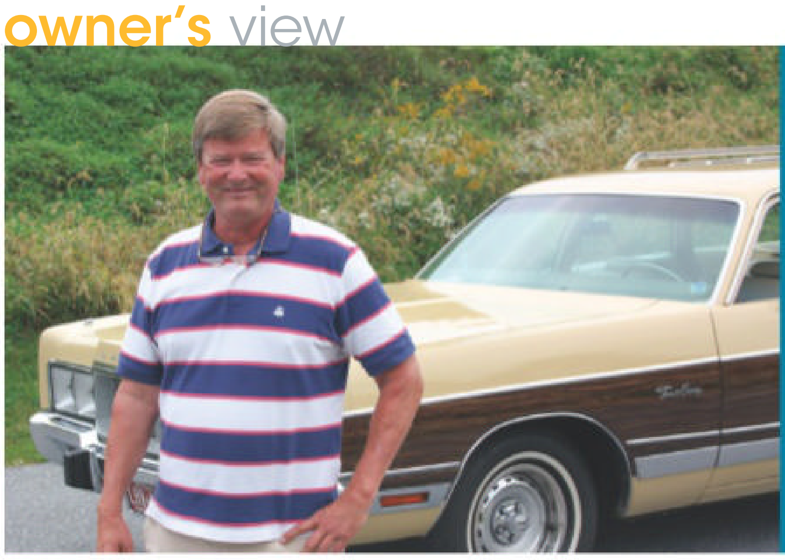


I was winding my way through the car corral at Hershey and had just purchased a 1969 Chrysler 300H, and I walked about another 100 feet and saw this car, which was also immaculate. We bought two cars in probably about an hour. They're both extraordinary cars. I have a bunch of Mopars, including several Letter Cars, a half-dozen Imperials, and my share of Chrysler muscle cars, too, including a 426 Hemi Road Runner. I grew up in a Chrysler family and my cousin was a Dodge dealer in Hatboro, Pennsylvania. I like the engineering. Chrysler put all their money where you didn't see it. This wagon is from 1973, one of my favorite years. It probably has close to 100,000 miles on it, but you would never, ever know it. The condition makes it one of one to me." — *Hank Hallowell*

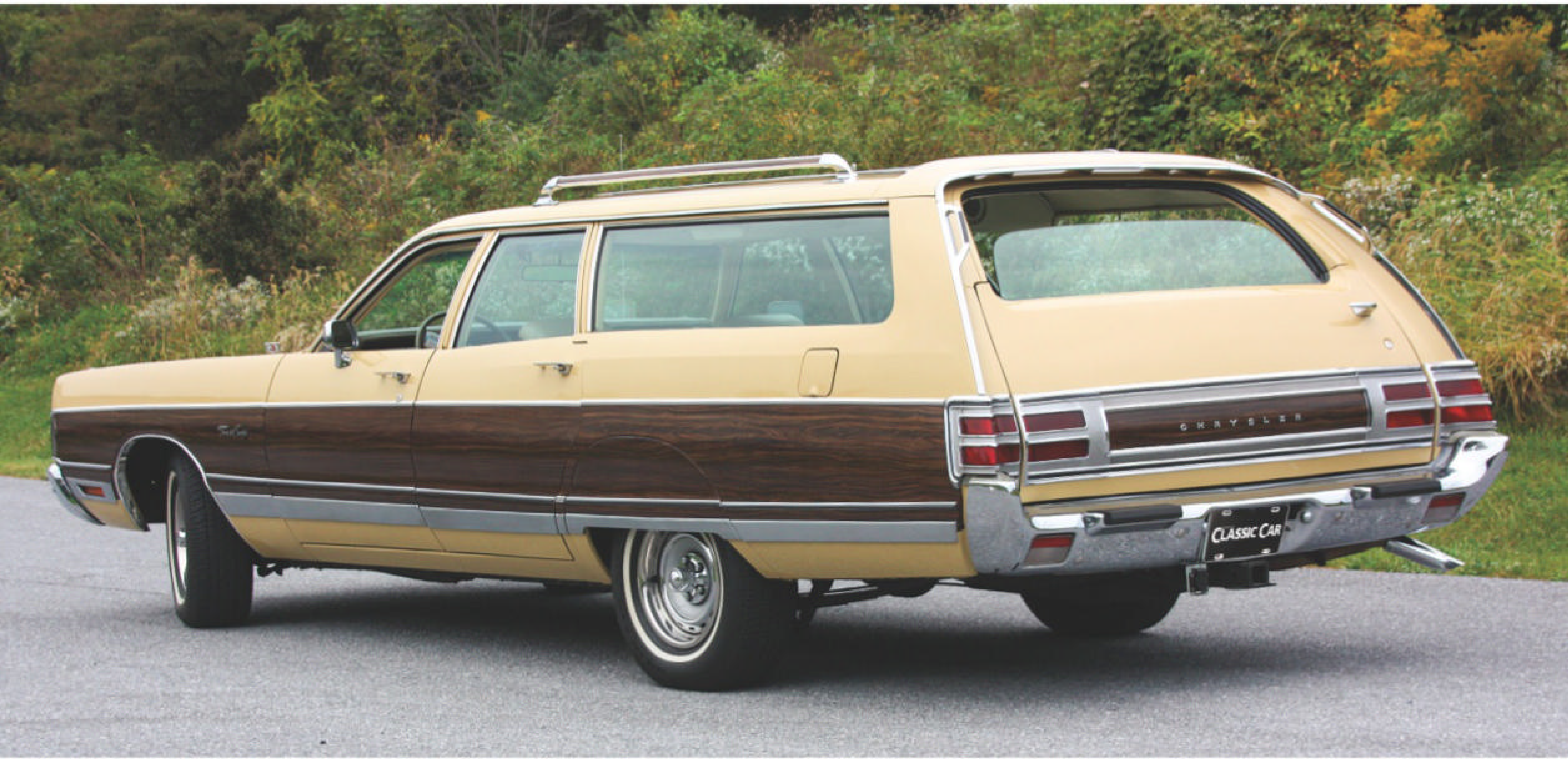
tailgate. Hank doubts anyone has ever sat in the third seat. Automatic headlamp dimmers and timed headlamp delay are also part of the equipment list.

The most intensive part of the Chrysler's very limited refurbishment involved a cutting-edge element of 1970s Mopar technology: the thumbwheel-controlled Auto Temp II climate-control system. For 1973, this was highly advanced: a servo-controlled, closed-loop system developed by Chrysler and its supplier, Ranco Incorporated. Hank recalls the challenge of replacing the control unit's servo after buying the car. "Chrysler developed Auto Temp II for itself, but ended up selling it to Mercedes-Benz," he says. "Mercedes used it through the 1970s and into the early 1980s. So, if you get a 450 SL or any Mercedes-Benz from then that uses thumbwheel climate control, it's actually a Chrysler unit. The difference is the Chrysler unit was made of plastic, and eventually cracked from heat under the hood. The Mercedes-Benz system has kind of an aluminum housing. I didn't know this until I had a 500 SEC where the air conditioning unit went bad, and it had a Pentastar on it when I opened the hood. It took a little bit of Columbo-type detective work, but I managed to find a place down South that rebuilds these units."

Town & Country

This huge wagon, all 229.6 inches of it, is still driven sparingly. "The best thing I can tell you, it's like driving an elephant down the road," Hank notes. "It handles well, but there's a lot of weight, and it needs every cubic inch of that 440. It has a tremendous ride because of the very stiff torsion-bar suspension. There's almost no sway and zero yaw. It's like driving a torpedo-shaped motorhome, with 75 the speed of choice, in total silence.

"This car's no spring chicken," he says. "But it's got no squeaks, no rattles, and no vibration. It just goes."



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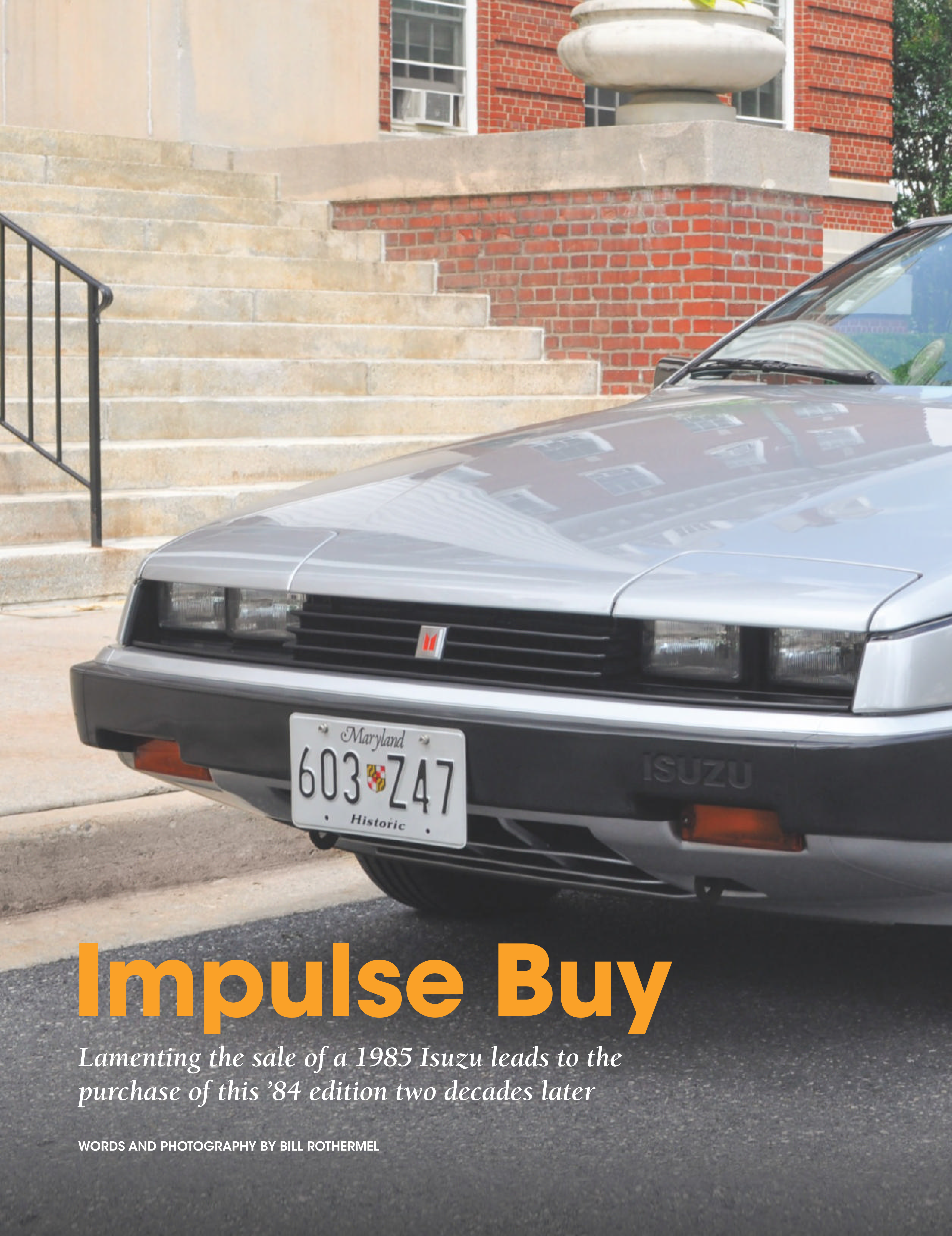
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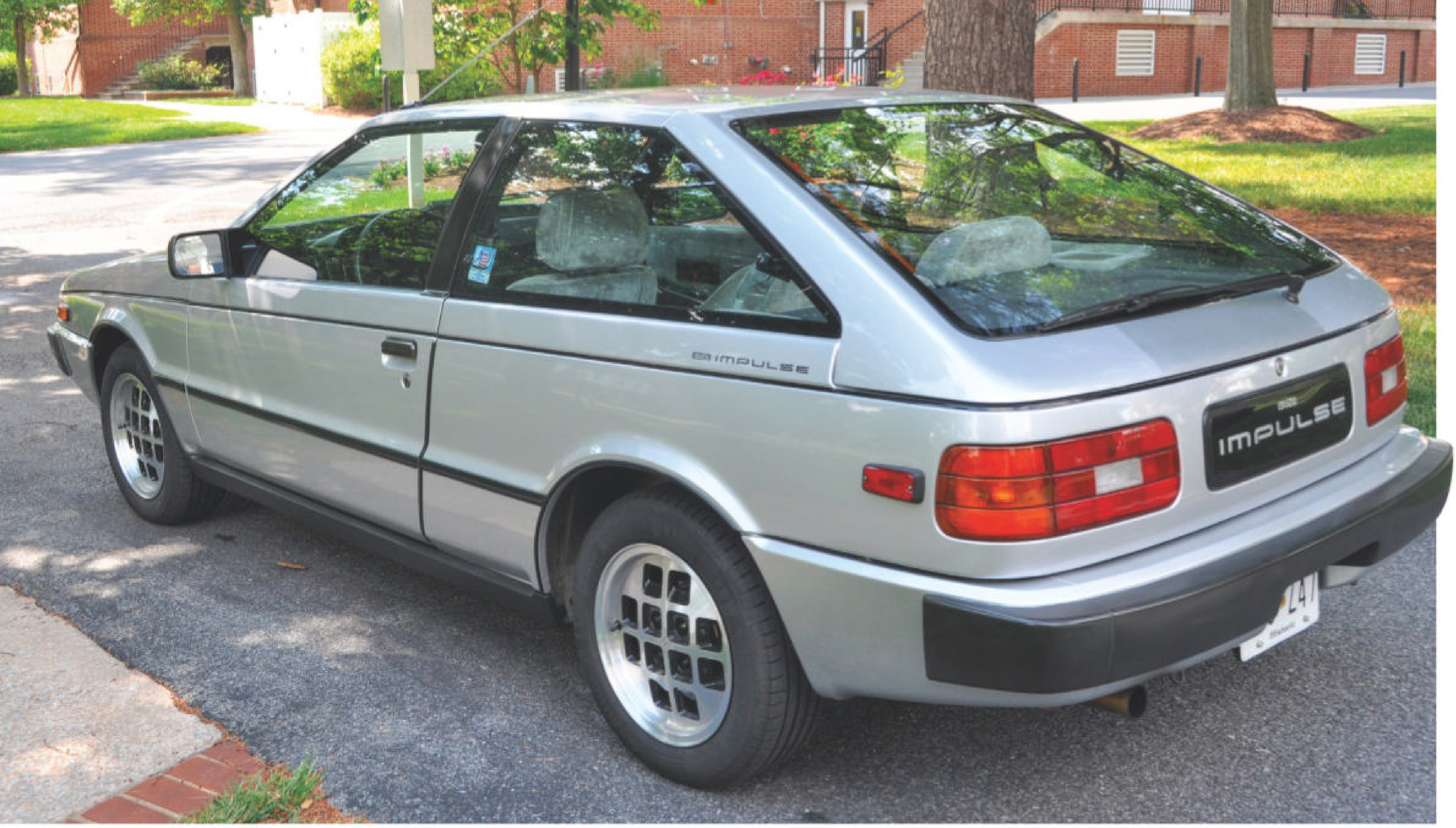
Impulse Buy

Lamenting the sale of a 1985 Isuzu leads to the purchase of this '84 edition two decades later

WORDS AND PHOTOGRAPHY BY BILL ROTHERMEL

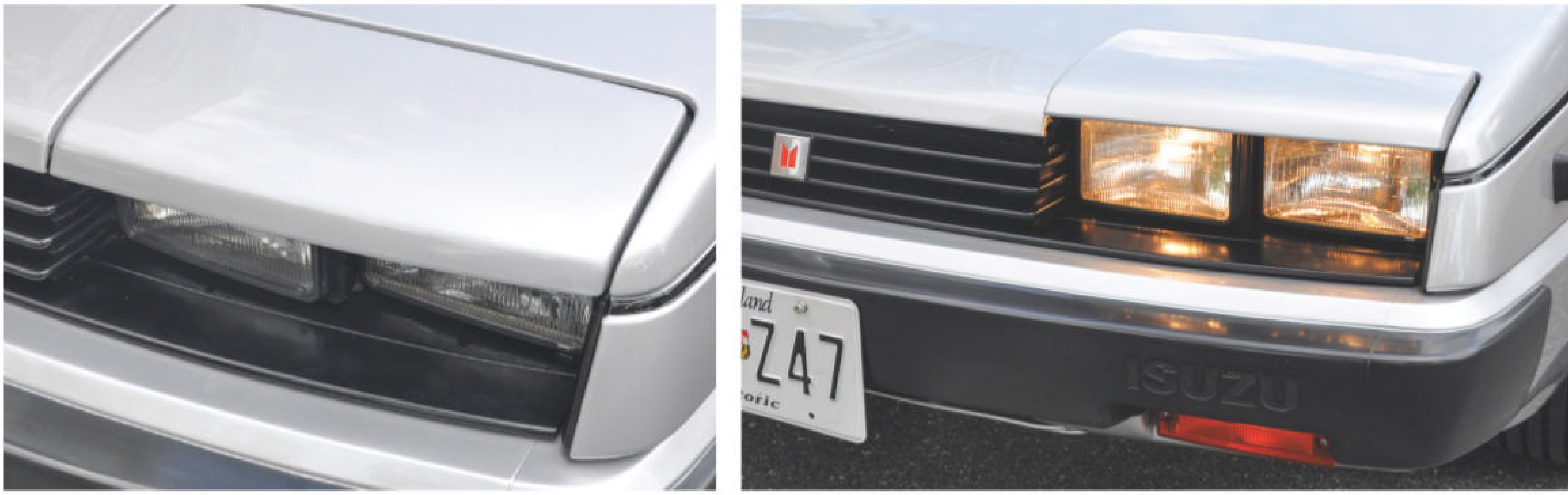


Brad Shawger was like most other 18-year-olds looking for cheap transportation as his first car. Unlike most other 18-year-olds, he landed on an Isuzu Impulse. It's probably safe to say many of you have never even heard of the Impulse, let alone seen one in the metal. Designed by Giorgetto Giugiaro (famous for the first-generation Volkswagen Golf and BMW M1, among many others), it was an important car stylistically, and quite a reach for the Japanese car manufacturer best known for making trucks.

The Impulse—a replacement for the handsome Isuzu 117 Coupe (also a Giugiaro design) that was never sold in the U.S.—owed its existence to the mundane Isuzu Gemini, itself an adaptation of the Opel Kadett, or General Motors' T-car. Launched in South America in 1973, the T-car platform was first sold in the U.S. as the Chevrolet Chevette for the 1976 model year, and quickly became a huge seller for GM and Chevrolet.

The Impulse started out as the final ace in Giugiaro's '70s-production-based concept-car deck. The "Asso" (Ace) series started with 1973's Audi 80-based Asso di Picche and 1976's BMW 3-series-based Asso di Quadri preceding it. They were never produced. Small-scale Japanese car builder Isuzu, a former Giugiaro client, came calling for a replacement for the long-in-the-tooth, personal-luxury 117 coupe that had been in production since 1968. Italdesign was given free reign with the style—the only requirement was that the chassis was based on the Isuzu Gemini, a car sold here as both the Buick/Opel from 1976-'80, and the rear-drive Isuzu I-Mark from 1981-on. The result was Asso di Fiori: the Ace of Clubs.

The clean wedge shape was largely unadorned, with flush glass and cleverly hidden seams. The hood wraps around atop the fenders and helps form a body-length character line; the A-pillar is rendered invisible by the leading edge of the full-framed door. Inside, the instrument cluster adjusted with the steering column, and featured a pair of pods, located within fingers' reach from the steering wheel, that incorporated lights, wipers, and more. Launched at the 1979 Tokyo Motor



An interesting design element was the subtle play between headlamps, grille, and sleek profile. Foregoing true "pop-ups," the headlamps were fixed, and "eyebrows" opened when activated.

> *The biggest challenge in owning the Isuzu has been parts. "If I had not had my stash of parts, I would have been in big trouble.*

Show, it caused such a stir that Isuzu management green-lit the design and fast-tracked its production. A few concessions were made for US federalization: the nose was raised slightly so that the headlights would be at legal height, the windshield was steepend by four degrees, and the whole package was enlarged an inch all around to accommodate American-sized buyers.

The production car was named Piazza. Assembly of the four-cylinder, rear-wheel-drive coupe began in September 1980 with varying trim levels available in Japan, Europe, and Australia. Both a five-speed manual and four-speed Aisin automatic transmissions were available. U.S. deliveries did not begin until the 1983 model year, where the stylish vehicle was re-named the Impulse. Cars featured everything as standard equipment, including air conditioning, power windows and door locks, four-wheel disc brakes, and some rad-looking "waffle" alloy wheels. The only option was a choice of manual or automatic transmission.

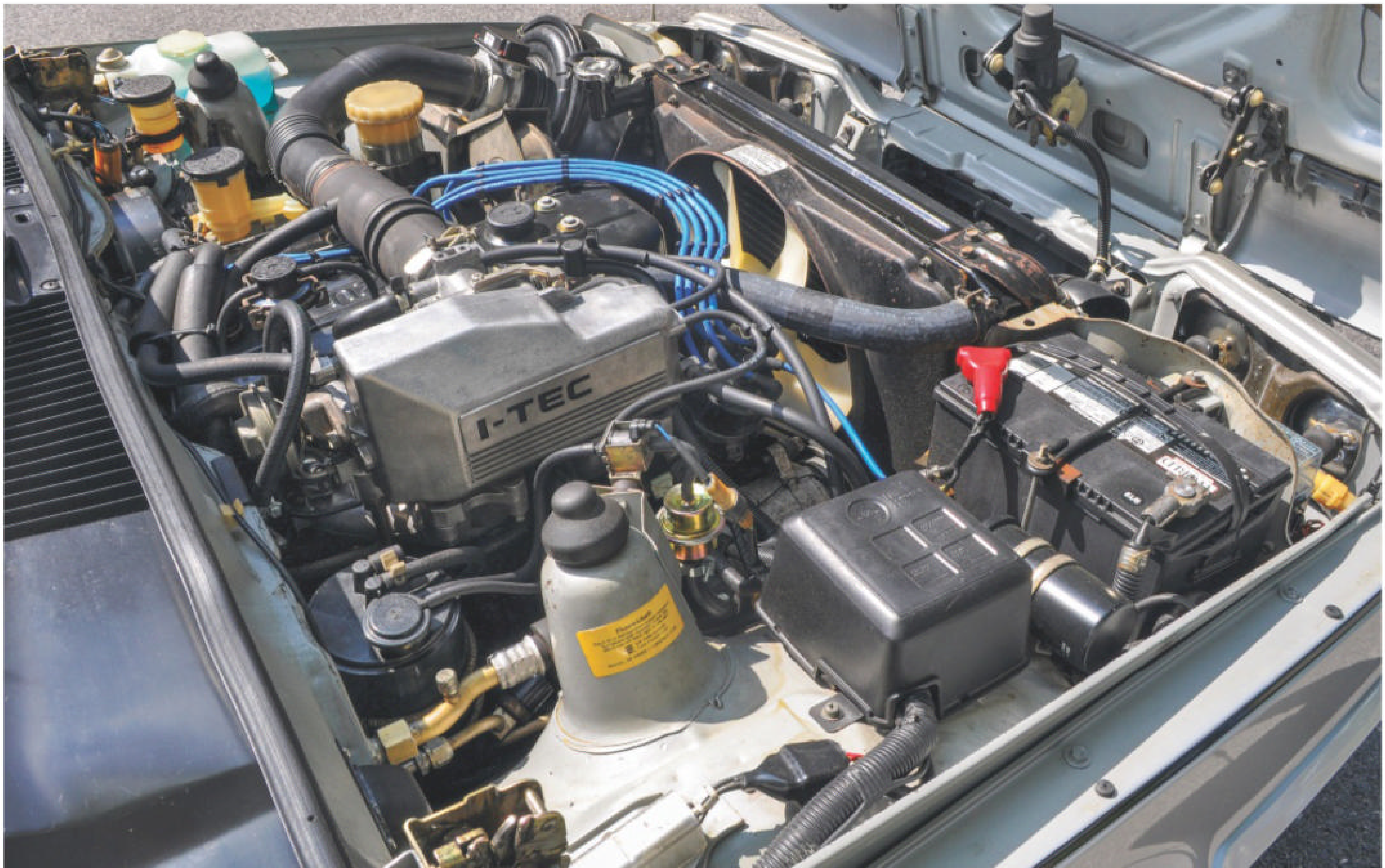
Stateside, all Impulses came standard with Isuzu's 90-hp SOHC 1,994-cc in-line four-cylinder engine with I-Tec fuel injection for the 1983 and '84 model years; later, the engine was upgraded to a 110-hp 2,254-cc four-cylinder (for U.S. cars only). A 140-hp 1,994-cc MPFI turbo model was introduced for 1985; the turbo model was given the RS designation for 1987. The 1988 models received interior and exterior changes, most notably the addition of a rear spoiler and slimmer headlamps allowing for the elimination of the pop-up covers.

The car was never a sales success. Even a clever ad campaign with character "Joe Isuzu" (played by actor David Leisure), a pathological liar who made outrageous and over-inflated claims about Isuzu cars, didn't boost sales.

Isuzu gave it one last shot by sending the car to "finishing school" for the 1988-'89 model years. Impulses went to Lotus (then owned by General Motors) for suspension tuning and the all-important "Handling by Lotus" badges. Underneath it all, the Impulse remained a GM T-car—this, from a company best known for making small, economical trucks like the Chevy LUV. The final year for the rear-drive Impulse was 1989, though it re-appeared in front-wheel-drive form one year later as Isuzu's version of the Chevrolet-sold Geo Storm. It's estimated that some 13,000 first- and second-generation models were built for worldwide consumption.

Brad, now 42, looks back to when he was 18. "My first cars were two VW

During the 1984 model year, Isuzu equipped US-bound Impulses with a SOHC 1,994-cc four-cylinder engine that boasted a factory rating of 90 hp thanks in part to Isuzu's electronic fuel injection.



Beetles, a 1969 and a '71. I thought they were the coolest. The plan was to fix one up with the help of my dad, who was a diesel mechanic, and sell the other. I sold one car and needed something to drive while I worked on the other Beetle. Our neighbor had a car that was sitting under a tarp for a long time and my dad said, 'Why don't you ask him what he's doing with that thing?' So, I did. It had drivetrain issues, but $500 later it was sitting in my parents' garage." Brad was now the owner of a five-speed 1985 Isuzu Impulse, black with brown interior. "I quickly fell in love with that little car and had lots of fun through high school and college," he adds.

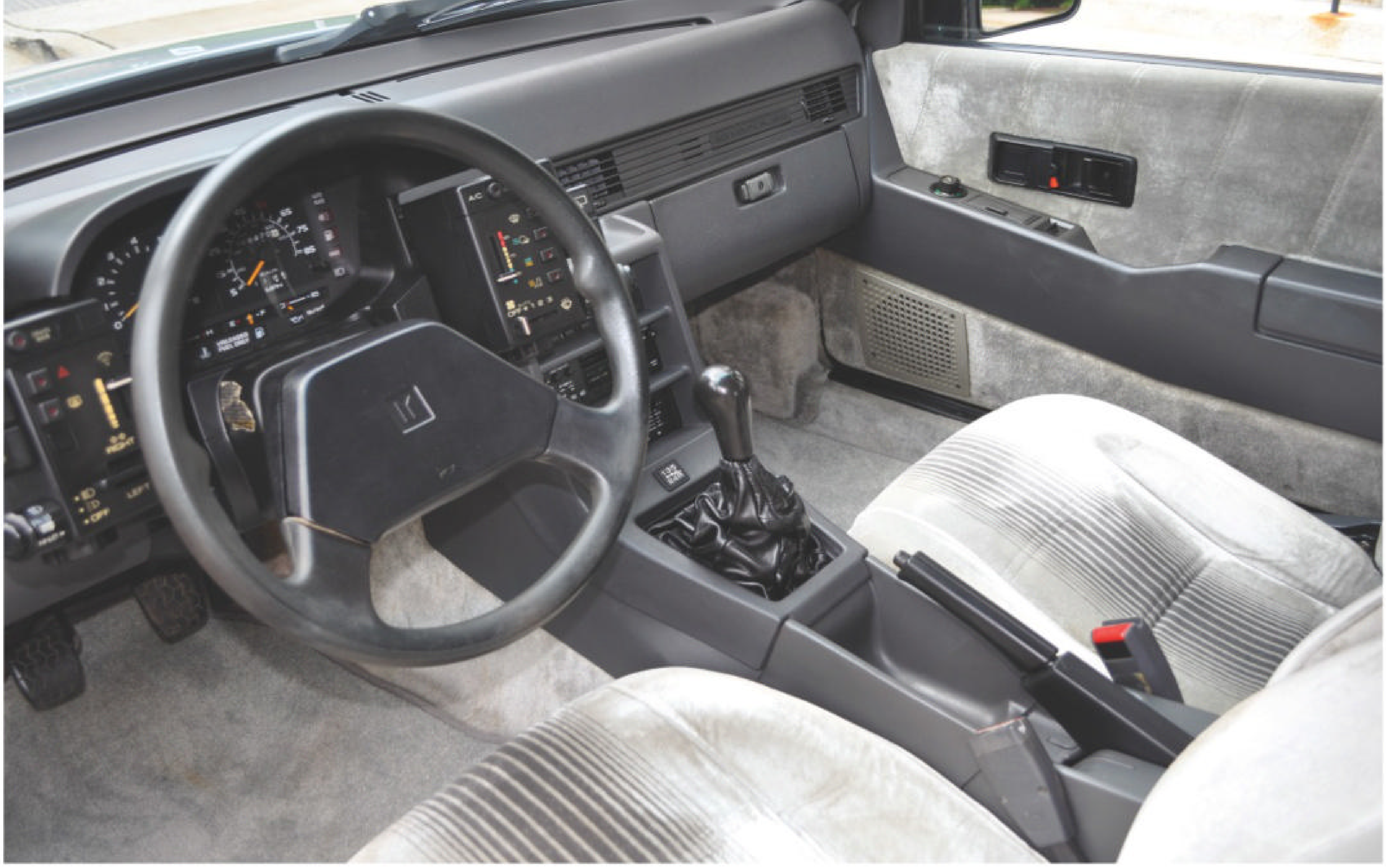
Despite doing lots of work to his Impulse, including a paint job and an engine rebuild, it fell victim to four years of salt and Pennsylvania winters where Brad grew up. "The rear end went out and it rusted badly… and I was going away to school," he says. "It sat behind my dad's shed for a few years until he finally said it was time to get rid of it. Even in 2000, it was tough to get parts and I could not find the rear end pieces I needed. The heater core leaked, damaging the interior, which also housed a few mice. I stripped it down to save everything I could and put the parts in bins. There they sat in my dad's shed for 20 years," Brad laments. "I always hoped I could find another one day." Turns out, this was one of the best things he could have done.

"About 2020, I thought it was time to start looking for an Impulse. I hadn't seen one in nearly 20 years. I got on forums and Facebook groups, including isuzone.org, where I found lots of great folks who were eager to help," Brad says. "I had just missed a Florida car that was exactly what I was looking for, and shortly thereafter, I landed on a pair in Tennessee, which were in about as good of shape as the one I parted out, so I bought them both. At a minimum, I thought they would be good for parts. I still have them," he adds. "I was able to find a bunch of stuff on clearance, too, on rockauto.com: a brake master cylinder for $1.25 and brake calipers for $10! I replaced everything I could on my gold 1985 and got it running, but it still needs a lot of body and interior work."

In 2020 Brad moved to Maryland and parked the two cars in his friend's backyard in Pittsburgh. Lo and behold, the car he missed out on previously reappeared on Facebook: a silver 1984 five-speed, one-owner, Florida car with 67,000 miles.

"The car ended up with a dealer in Ohio, and I stayed in touch with the guy. He said he wanted to hold onto it. In the summer of 2021, I was visiting my parents in Pennsylvania, and Ohio is just over the

ISUZU
IMPULSE



Futuristic Eighties styling abounds inside the Impulse, from the angular two-spoke steering wheel center (enhancing gauge vision) to stereo equalizers. Bucket seats were standard.

border. I conveniently brought my truck and trailer, paid the guy a visit, made a deal, and came home with the car! It had great documentation, including a detailed mechanic's log going back to 2000 that has proven invaluable when working on it," Brad says.

It was clear that the Impulse had been well-maintained and cared for, especially on the exterior. "There was some paint fade on the bumpers and everything rubber needed to be replaced, but it was obviously garage-kept. It came with the original Guigiaro waffle wheels. I saved those and put on a spare set that I had refinished from one of my other cars. There was some surface rust at the base of the rear window at the wiper arm and some minor dents and dings. I've had it repaired and the bumper painted, but otherwise, it is an original car," Brad says. "When I take it to shows, reactions are mixed. Most people don't know what it is. Others say 'Wow, I've heard about these, but I've never actually seen one!' A small percentage of people know the car and the history and get excited about it."

The biggest challenge in owning the Isuzu has been parts. "If I had not had my stash of parts, I would have been in big trouble. Some years ago, I bought [and installed] a brand-new muffler off the internet. Virtually everything on the car that could leak, did. Everything has now been updated and replaced—radiator core, hoses, gaskets, ball joints, shocks, clutch slave cylinder, fuel line, vacuum lines, and rebuilt master cylinder—to make it a dependable driver. I've gotten some parts from Japan—it took four months until they arrived!" Brad says. "I found an '83-'85 parts book and spent many hours researching part numbers and bought many parts online," he adds. The only thing Brad has not been able to find: a heater core—a common problem among all his Impulses.

CRUISE MAIN
RESUME ACCEL
SET COAST
RIGHT
PASS
OFF

Among Brad's arsenal is a 2009 six-speed Dodge Challenger SRT8, a 1995 Jeep Cherokee five-speed manual that's been lifted 6.5 inches with mud terrain tires, and a truck and trailer to haul his toys. "I don't discriminate. I like all kinds of cars," he says laughing. What's next? Brad has his eye on a Mitsubishi Starion. Regardless of what he's driving, Brad Shawger is an Isuzu guy who became immediately hooked—thanks to an "Impulse" buy years ago.

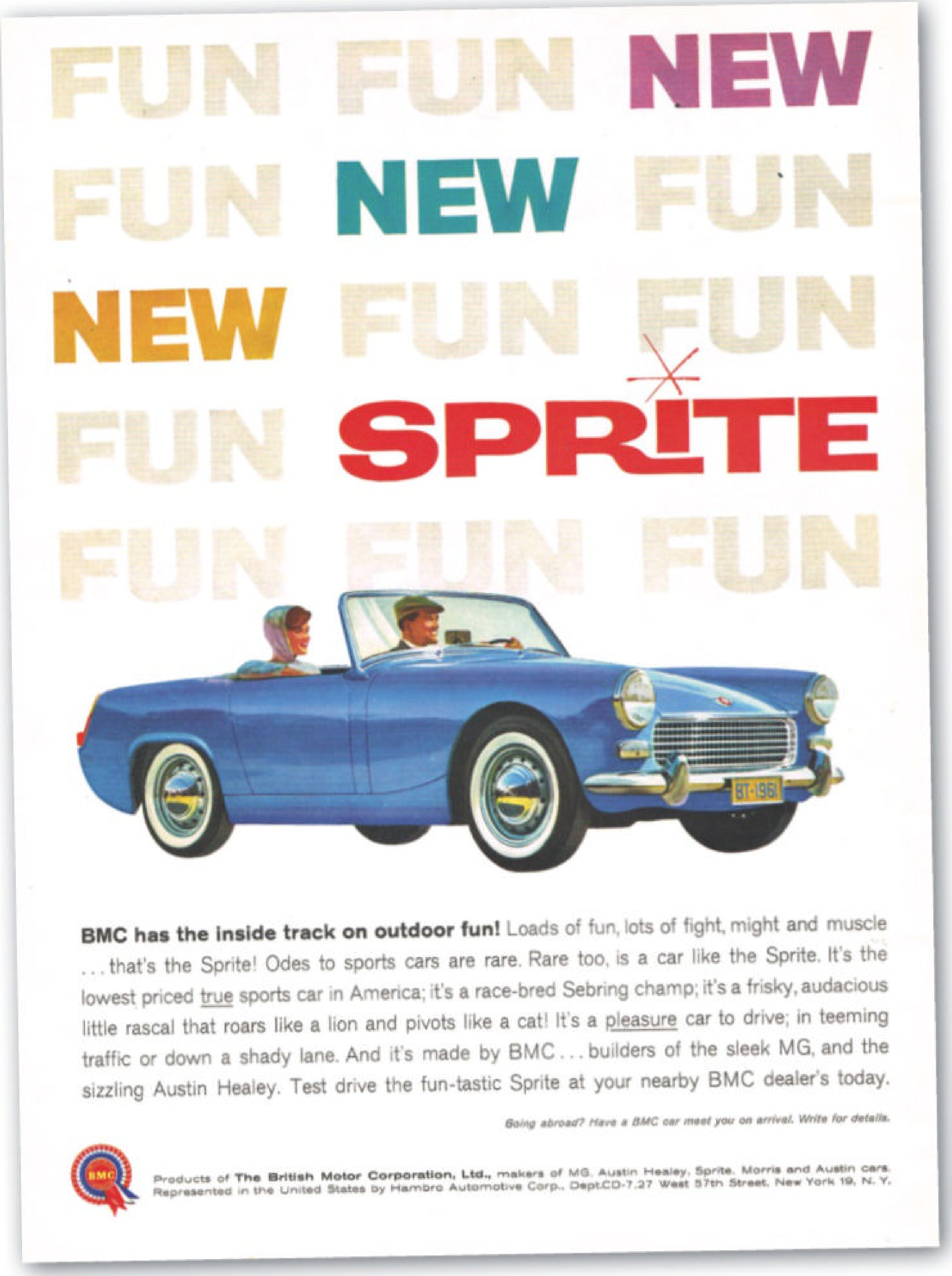
CHARLES STEINMAN
FAIRPORT, NEW YORK

Sports Car Memories

I HAD ALWAYS BEEN A CAR NUT BUT didn't have an opportunity to own one while in high school. That changed between my first and second years of college, when my parents relented and let me bring a car back to school. Given the fact that they had no money to contribute to the purchase, I was obligated to buy something based on whatever money I could save up over the summer. Luck (although I'm not sure I would have called it that later) would have it that a guy around the corner was selling a 1962 Austin-Healey Sprite that met my two requirements: It ran (some of the time), and I had the money to buy it.

Of course, you must have a decent sound system in your car and 8-tracks were all the rage then, so the first post-purchase project was the installation of a tape player. My father, although an incredibly handy guy, really didn't know any more about cars than I did, but he figured we could put a few wires together. We followed the instructions and hooked it up. Unfortunately, we didn't know that British cars of the time were positive ground and when I put an 8-track tape in the player, smoke came out of the de-froster vents. It was the first step in a long learning process.

When the Upstate New York weather turned cold, I found out that the heater didn't work very well. Actually, it didn't work at all. I brought the car home one weekend and my dad and I tried to figure it out. It didn't take long—someone had removed the heater core and fan. A trip to the junkyard and a few hours of work sorted that out, although even after the installation was completed you could hardly notice if the heater was on or not. With our trusty Clymer manual at hand, we learned how to do oil changes, brake replacements, tune-ups, and even a complete engine overhaul when the main bearings finally gave out.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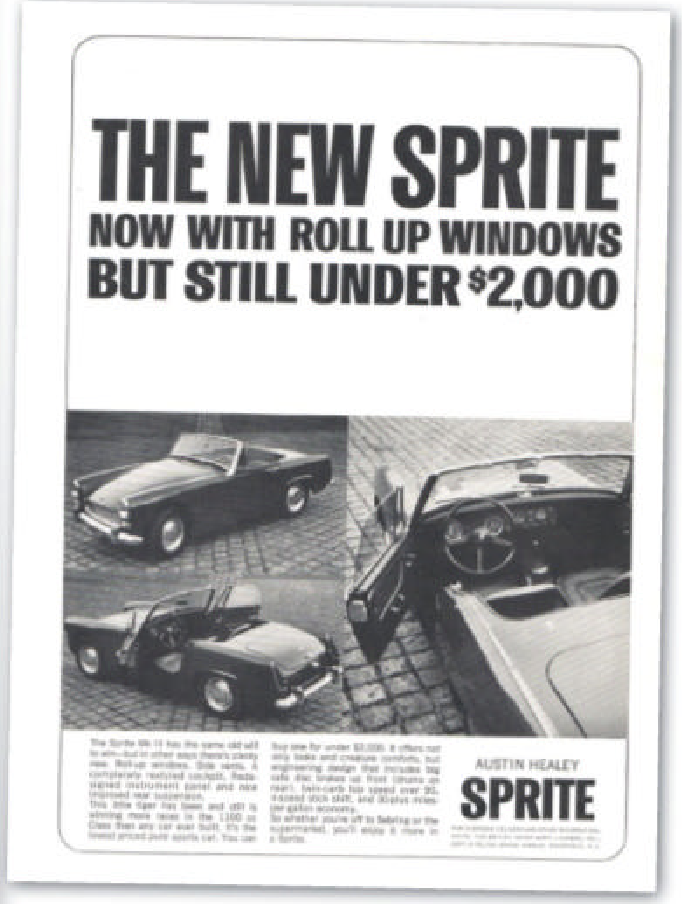

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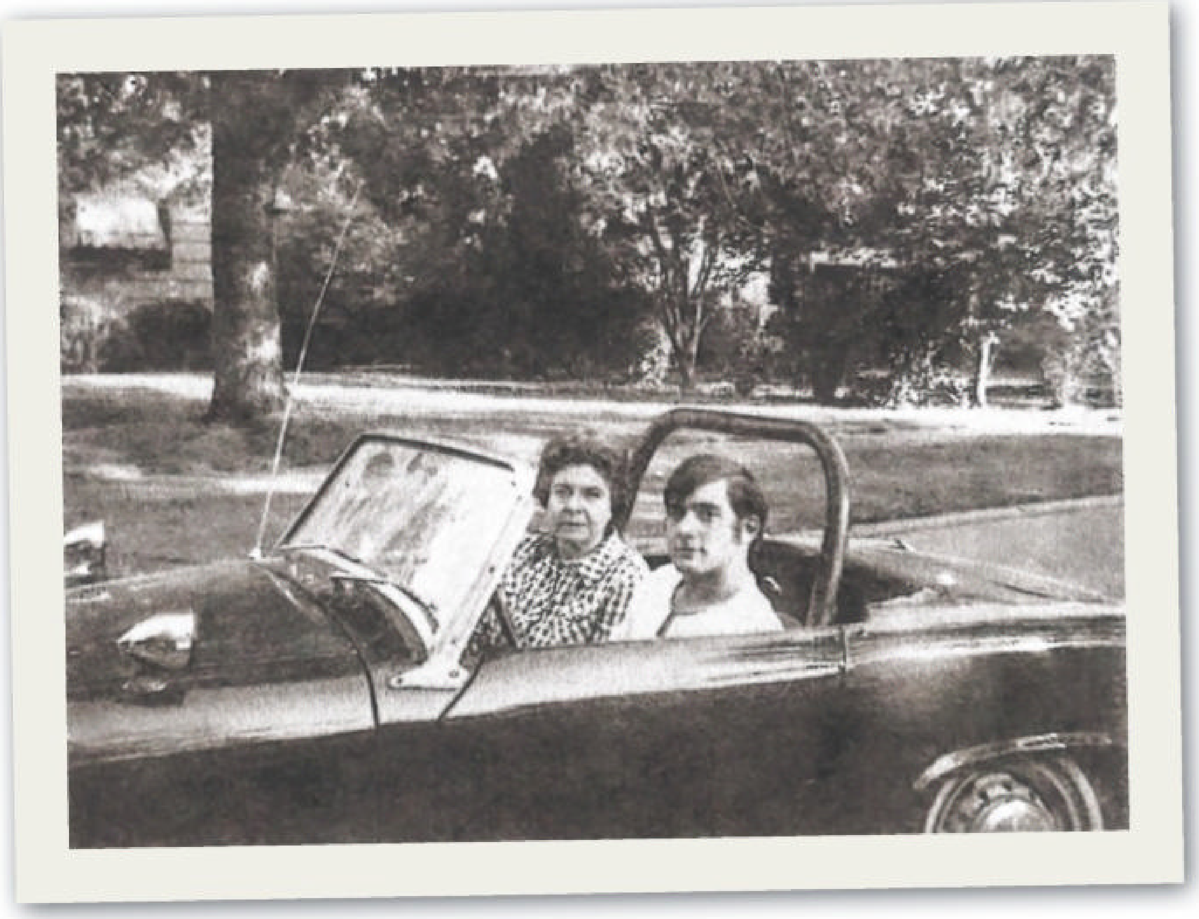

Charles Steinman, accompanied by his mother, in his 1962 Austin-Healey Sprite circa 1968.

The Sprite's last gasp was on a trip back from visiting my brother in Vermont. The wind got a hold of my top and ripped it in half. I was 350 miles away from home and had to drive it back in the rain with a towel and a pith helmet over my head, all while wiping the rain off the inside of the windshield. You'd be amazed at the looks you get on the New York State Thruway when you're dressed like that. I sold the Sprite and replaced it with a considerably less troublesome Triumph TR4A. My dad helped me keep that running, too.

Fast forward a few years and my father asked me to join him at an address not too far from his house. I assumed he wanted me to help him with his job, and when I arrived, there was a stunning red 1971 MGB in the driveway. He asked me what I thought of it. I said it was really nice, but why was he asking? He looked at me like the idiot I was and said, "What makes you think that, during all those years I was helping you with your cars, I didn't want a sports car of my own? I couldn't afford it then because I had to put you through college and law school. Now it's my turn."

He and my mother loved that car, and I later gave him my Porsche 914 for a more weather-resistant driving experience. It was followed by a host of others; most notable was his last car, a double-black 1967 Chevrolet El Camino with a 327 and a console-shift automatic. We went to many car shows together, he with his El Camino and me in one of a series of Porsches. Those were magical times for us. My dad has been gone for many years now, but every time I break out the tools he left to me—to work on the latest project car—the memories come back to me, and I smile.

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CARLISLE EVENTS OR AS CREDITED

Carlisle Auctions 2022

The Keystone State hammers the Fall sale to a $5.4 million result

FALL IS AN IMPORTANT SEASON FOR CARLISLE EVENTS, FOR IT WAS IN the fall of 1974 when the first such gathering of purveyors of automotive parts and memorabilia occurred on the Carlisle Fairgrounds. The south-central city in Pennsylvania has since become as linked to vintage automobiles as Hershey, just a short drive to the East, and like that storied autumn event, Fall Carlisle has been hosting a collector car auction for years at the Carlisle Expo Center.

The 2022 dates were September 29-30, and according to event organizers, the auction delivered a 455-vehicle catalog, 20 of which originated from co-founder Bill Miller's collection. Not surprisingly, the usual suspects rose to the top of the sales results, led by a 1969 Pontiac Trans Am that commanded $91,000 (all listed sale prices exclude a buyer's premium). Right behind was a 1962 Chevy Corvette that realized $85,000. If you were among the many who thought muscle cars would dominate the top 10, note that a 1954 Kaiser Darrin delivered an $82,000 sale price. Carlisle Auctions recorded a sell-through rate of 64 percent while amassing a grand total of $5.4 million. For more results from this sale, and a calendar of future auctions, visit carlisleauctions.com.

1975 CADILLAC ELDORADO

Reserve: Undisclosed
Sale Price: $7,250
Avg. Market Range: $8,000 - $12,000

Some would suggest there was little within the domestic industry to rave about in the mid-'70s, save for what were supposed to be "the last" convertibles. Though that body style was available in Cadillac's Eldorado series, this example was a fixed-roof coupe. Details about its past were lacking, other than the fact that the penultimate owner had held its title since 1984, and had been responsible for a repaint—in the factory code 24 Jennifer Blue hue—a decade ago. A light-use patina showed on the white leather seating within, and the engine bay was surprisingly devoid of road grime and rust. This was well bought.

1953 KAISER MANHATTAN

Reserve: Undisclosed
Selling Price: $16,000
Avg. Market Range: $17,500 - $23,000

We're betting many enthusiasts have forgotten that the first modern, postwar designs didn't emerge from Ford, GM, or even Chrysler, but rather from Kaiser/Frazer. When the all-new Kaiser line was unveiled, missing were all traces of running boards and pontoon fenders. The new cars were a bold leap ahead of the industry. By the time this 1953 four-door sedan from the Manhattan series was built, the automaker was known for the unique "Darrin Dip" greenhouse. Apparently, just one family owned this example from new until it was purchased by Bill Miller (of Carlisle Events fame) at an undisclosed date, then showing just 20,000 miles. Believed to be all-original, it sold well.

1952 DODGE CORONET DIPLOMAT

Reserve: Undisclosed
Selling price: $22,500
Avg. Market Range: $13,000 - $17,000

When Buick pulled the veil off its 1949 two-door hardtop design, "Riviera" styling became an overnight sensation. Within a year, if you didn't have a hardtop coupe in your lineup, you were going to lose customers. Dodge introduced its version in 1950, but the body style didn't have a catchy name until '51, when the Diplomat nameplate first appeared. Pictured here was a '52 Diplomat from the popular Coronet series. The catalog claimed it to have a V-6 engine, though we know it was actually of the inline variety. New paint and a mechanical redo were mentioned on a placard placed within this visually attractive two-tone Dodge, helping explain the bump in the sale price over the value range.

LEGEND

Reserve: Minimum price owner will accept
Selling Price: What the vehicle sold for (including the buyer's premium)
Average Market Range: Values coincide with current market trends for vehicles rated from condition #2- to #1, respectively

BONHAMS

Audrain Action

BONHAMS HOSTED ITS AUDRAIN CONCOURS AUCTION IN NEWPORT, RHODE ISLAND, this past fall, with total sales exceeding $6.8 million and a 75.5-percent sell-through. One of the oldest cars to sell was a 1920 Mercer Model 22-70 Series 5 "Raceabout." The CCCA full classic was well-preserved, and it was converted into a Raceabout configuration in the 1940s. Known as chassis number 5092, it was a perfect example of the early conversions and had not undergone any other changes. It spent a lot of time as a part of the Harrah Collection, and if you looked closely, you could see the original yellow paint through the red paintwork. It had a four-cylinder 298-cubic-inch engine paired with a rare (for the time) four-speed transmission. The repurposed Mercer changed hands for $268,800.

Also selling at Audrain was a 1929 Packard Model 645 Deluxe Eight Roadster with coachwork by Dietrich. The sixth series Packard had a 385-cu.in. Inline-eight with a single carburetor under the hood, mated to a three-speed manual transmission. Recently restored, it had been used sparingly the past few years. The Dietrich coachwork featured all the proper accoutrements including a spotlight, dual side mounted spares, chrome wire wheels Trippe Speedlight driving lights, golf door, and luggage rack. The ownership history was fuzzy, but the Packard had undergone a thorough restoration before it won various awards at the Meadow Brook Hall Concours d'Elegance in Rochester, Michigan, during the 1990s. The pinstriped Packard rolled off the block for $117,600. Full results from the Bonhams auction are now available at bonhams.com.

FEBRUARY

10-11 • Carlisle Auctions
Lakeland, Florida
717-243-7855 • carlisleevents.com

10-12 • G. Potter King Auction
Atlantic City, New Jersey
856-573-6969 • gpkauctions.net

24-26 • McCormick Auction
Palm Springs, California
760-320-3290 • classic-carauction.com

Please note that these events are active as of press time. We recommend you verify the status before making plans to attend.

Mecum Twofer

TWO AUCTIONS WITHIN 600 MILES TOOK PLACE COURTESY OF MECUM AS ITS ANNUAL Chicago and Chattanooga auctions brought in a combined $36.4 million with more than 1,000 vehicles finding a new home. The Chicago auction, which took place in Schaumburg, realized sales of $2.15 million with a 67.5-percent sell-through in the category of American made unmodified cars and trucks up to the 1959 model year. Among those to sell was a 1953 Buick Roadmaster convertible that underwent an extensive frame-off restoration. The classy Roadmaster was powered by the vaunted "nailhead" V-8 engine, and it went through its speeds via a Dynaflow transmission. The black paint job was complemented with a red and black leather interior and a power black top with a red boot cover. Other power options included windows and power front seat, and other interior comforts included a fully functioning Sonomatic AM radio, clock, heater, and defroster. The Roadmaster rode on Skylark wire wheels with wide whitewall tires. When the final bid was tallied, the Buick sold for $92,400.

At Chattanooga, 80 percent of the older American vehicles sold with $3.5 million in this segment changing hands. Among them was this Edsel Pacer sedan complete with 410-cu.in. engine and three-speed Cruise-O-Matic transmission. Features included a pushbutton gear selector, factory wheel covers, gauges, clock, and tachometer, plus a vintage Edsel radio. The representative of the short-lived FoMoCo brand was freshly painted and was a great example of the first year Edsels. It would go on to sell for $15,400. For a list of the full consignments from both shows, visit mecum.com.

MECUM

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BY TERRY SHEA AND MARK J. McCOURT
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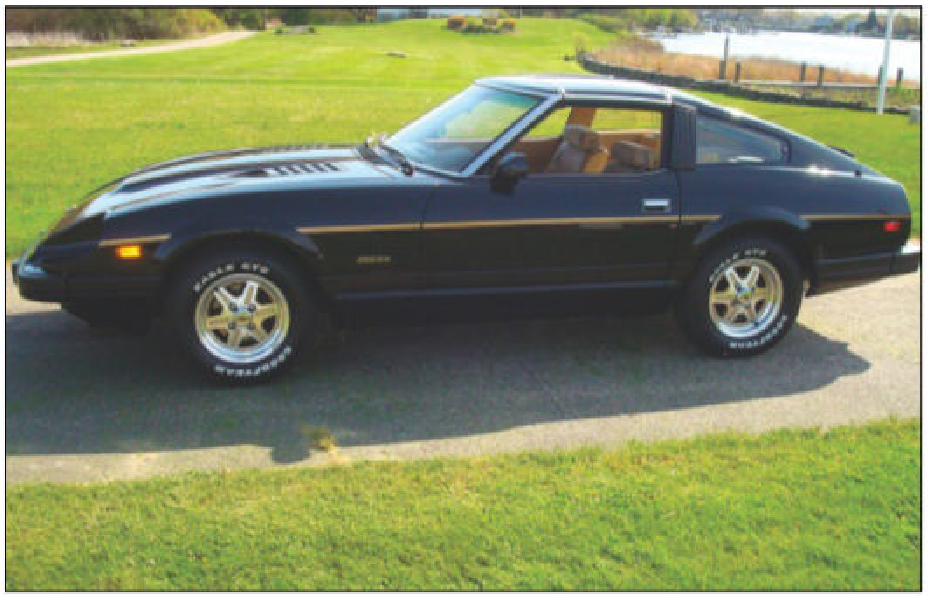
HEMMINGS AUCTIONS IS OUR LIVE, ONLINE AUCTION SITE STAFFED BY customer service professionals ready to help bidders and sellers with any questions. A wide variety of classic and specialty vehicles from all eras are up for bid. Auctions run for two weeks, and qualified bidders place their bids electronically. Once a vehicle is accepted into the auction, the seller pays only a $99.95 listing fee. The winning bidder is responsible for a 5-percent fee on all completed auctions. The following are examples of auctions that transpired during the month leading up to press time. If you have questions, comments, or suggestions, email Director of Auction Operations Terry Shea: terryshea@hemmings.com.

1956 FORD THUNDERBIRD

Reserve: $32,000
Selling Price: $33,600*
Recent Market Range: $30,000-$42,880

Featuring understated lines when excess ruled the Detroit studios, "Early Bird" Thunderbirds have been collectible from day one. This '56 T-Bird included both its folding soft-top and the porthole-equipped hardtop. It also had a host of convenience options, such as a power seat and power windows. No age was mentioned for the Navajo Gray finish, a correct color in 1956, but it appeared to be holding up fairly well in the photos provided. The seller listed underhood updates intended to make driving this Ford more reliable, including a Mallory distributor with Pertronix ignition module and updated carburetor. With more than 17,000 views, it sold in the expected range as a post-auction Make Offer listing Classified.



1982 DATSUN 280ZX

Reserve: $17,000
Selling Price: $18,375*
Recent Market Range: $13,110-$21,150

With the addition of that letter "X" on the end if its name, Datsun's sports car had changed in the late 1970s, becoming a bit more refined than earlier versions. But, as this example showed, it still had an OHC inline-six engine and a five-speed manual transmission to keep its sporting edge. The seller reported owning this car for 34 years and overseeing one refinish in its Thunder Black hue but otherwise claimed originality for the rest of the vehicle. This well-equipped example also featured glass T-tops, reported to be free of leaks, and a leather-and-suede interior. This 280ZX sold as a Make Offer listing with a price that accurately reflected recent market trends for the model.

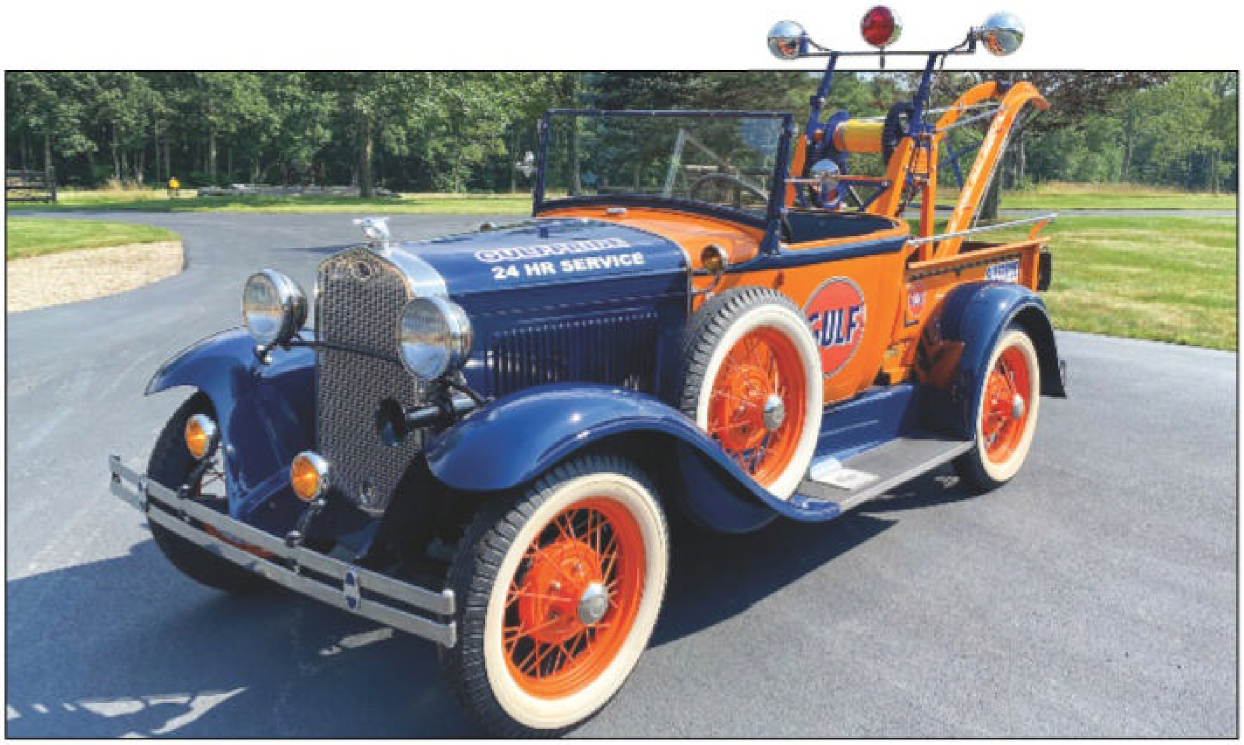
1931 BUICK SERIES 60

Reserve: $13,000
Selling Price: $18,638
Recent Market Range: $11,150-$17,430

More than 80 years of single-family ownership kept this 1931 Buick Series 60 four-door in what appeared to be remarkably good condition. It was said to have received a single repaint in the 1980s over never-rusted sheetmetal, its interior was never altered post-factory, and its straight-eight engine—believed to have driven only the 62,184 miles shown on the odometer—never needed rebuilding. The stately sedan's appearance was promised to be of fine "driver" quality, with nice chrome and minor wear to the interior's mohair upholstery and rear carpeting. Everything on the car worked, although the tires dated from the 1980s. Nine videos helped sell this car.

LEGEND

Reserve: Minimum price owner will accept
Selling Price*: What the vehicle sold for, inclusive of buyer's 5-percent fee
(*sold as a Make Offer listing following the live auction)
Recent Market Range: The low-to-high value range for the vehicle based on published results of similar vehicles sold at auction over the previous 18 months

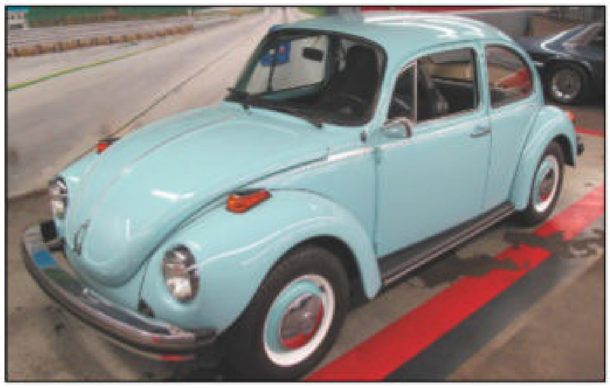


1931 MODEL A

Reserve: $30,000
Selling Price: $34,650

Recent Market Range:
$29,110-$45,250

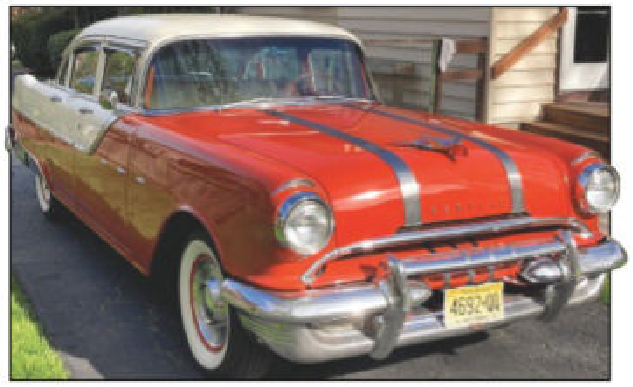
Was there any four-wheel role Ford's Model A could not fill? While this A was not originally a tow truck, a roadster pickup was converted into an Open Cab Tow Truck, which included a restored Weaver Auto Crane twin-boom mechanical wrecker assembly. The Gulf Oil colors were a tribute to the seller's father, who once owned a Gulf station. The seller reported that the redo was completed in 2020, which the condition in the photos certainly reflected. From its very clean engine bay, to an equally unblemished underside, to the familiar orange and blue livery, this truck generated a solid number of views on its way to 18 bids, which landed a final result clearly in the going market range.



1974 VOLKSWAGEN SUPER BEETLE

Reserve: $16,500
Selling Price: $15,750*
Recent Market Range: $10,200-$16,750

The last 48 years were kind to this Super Beetle Sedan, which reportedly had two owners and one paint job in its factory hue prior to crossing Hemmings Auctions' virtual block. This Southern California Volkswagen was largely untouched, with a correct-appearing waffle-pattern vinyl interior and fewer than 54,000 miles registered on the odometer. Its body appeared virtually rust-free, and no leaks or faults were noted in the flat-four engine or manual gearbox. The brakes worked fine behind VW hubcap-equipped aftermarket wheels mounting recent tires in the correct size. The original license plates and styled steel wheels went with the car, which enjoyed a healthy sale as a Make Offer listing.



1955 PONTIAC STAR CHIEF

Reserve: $12,500
Selling Price: $19,950
Recent Market Range: $10,100-$16,800

This example of Pontiac's flagship four-door sedan was a dead ringer for the one in the 1955 brochure, its "vogue two-tone" rendered in White Mist upper body over a Firegold lower, both applied during a 2004 body repaint. The seller said the car presented nicely with only minor body blemishes; its complementary two-tone interior was refreshed since that time, with notes of a non-functional clock and an AM/FM/CD stereo in the glove box. The Star Chief's 4-bbl.-carbureted 287-cu.in. V-8 was rebuilt in 2000; it and the Hydra-Matic transmission both promised correct operation. Tires were replaced when the suspension was refreshed around five years ago. The selling price surpassed the recent market range.

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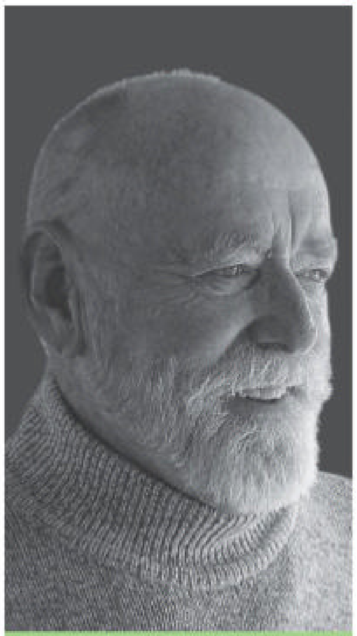

> I applaud people who keep such cars original and running, so we can all see, hear, and smell what once was.

Time to Restore or Re-Store?

In the 1990s I did the How-To segment on the *My Classic Car* TV show, and it was there that I saw my first restored car. This was *years* after having gone to Pebble Beach and other famous concours d'elegance shows. Let me explain.

One of the cars we featured on the show was a 1963 Corvette split-window coupe that had been meticulously restored to the way it was when it left the factory, right down to the slight orange peel in the paintwork and the faint overspray on the chassis. In fact, the owner researched everything to the point that he actually knew how much grease was shot into the fittings on the chassis!

Even the original chalk marks made by the inspectors on the assembly line were in place, despite dealers having usually erased them when they prepped the cars for sale. Also, the car's hubcaps were stowed in the back of the car, wrapped in the correct brown paper that the factory used for shipment. It took years, a lot of money, and a lot of research to make the car as painstakingly authentic as it was, and of course the owner never even started it. The car was strictly for show and was shipped in a closed trailer everywhere it went.

I say kudos to this true restorer who presented us with such an exact restoration of this unique car. I will not take a position on whether it is advisable for anyone to go to such incredible effort to recreate assembly-line mediocrity, though. Or for that matter, why restorers try to exceed the original with a lovingly hand-built fantasy of what the car could have been. That's because I also enjoy seeing the great classics over-restored to what they could have been.

The great classics on display at the prestigious concours shows are stunning to behold, and yes, they were hand built by craftsmen to very high standards, but they were never done to the level of perfection that you see at Pebble Beach. People who were alive at the time they were built would tell you so, and that includes my late father, who once shot paint for Howard "Dutch" Darrin back in the late 1930s.

Pop said that Dutch used a lot of lead, rather than the best metal finishing, and that some of his early Packard Darrins had problems with cowl shake after being sectioned and channeled, and the doors would pop open without warning. He then resorted to a cast-aluminum cowl. Apparently, Dutch relied on the designer's dictum: "If it looks good, it IS good," which is great for static art, but not necessarily ideal for kinetic items such as cars.

I have over-restored half a dozen cars to show-winning standards myself and have the trophies to prove it, and I have gone to a great deal of trouble to make them as factory-original as possible. But I like to drive classics too, so I have subtly upgraded and changed some of them to make them more usable in today's traffic.

For example, I have added more durable roller-type front-wheel bearings to my 1958 Chevrolet Apache parts-chaser pickup, and vented the brake drums for extra stopping power. I added aftermarket air conditioning to my 1955 Chevrolet Beauville station wagon so my wife and I can be comfortable on hot summer tours. I used the original factory-correct inlets in the passenger compartment, but I had to add an alternator to deal with the extra amps required to run the system.

With my 1940 Packard 110 coupe, I installed the correct original R9 Borg Warner overdrive available that year, but left the non-overdrive differential in place because it had a higher (numerically lower) gear ratio that allows me to drive at freeway speeds without over-revving the engine. Also, the Packard's paintwork is the original Harbor Gray hue, but it has been color sanded and polished to a gleaming perfection using modern materials that the carmakers were never blessed with at the factory.

So, what's my point? Just this: I admire and applaud people who restore cars to exact originality, though I have only ever seen one, and I also admire those who over-restore to concours d'elegance standards, based on the original French meaning of the term that originated in Paris in the 19th century, when people tarted up their horse-drawn vehicles and toured them around that city.

Also thrilling to me is seeing well-preserved original cars, because they are the most accurate tangible artifacts of automotive history we have left, and I am a history buff. Such surviving originals are the closest things to time machines that exist and are able to transport us back to another era. I applaud people who keep such cars original and running, so we can all see, hear, and smell what once was.

Instead of restoring, maybe all such preserved cars need is careful re-storing, not restoring, to make sure they survive for future generations to appreciate.

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